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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

DANCING AT LUGHNASA: THE CARNIVALESQUE IN BRIAN FRIEL'S PLAYS

BY

MARGO REGAN O'FLAHERTY

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **MASTER OF ARTS**.

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

Edmonton, Alberta
FALL 1993

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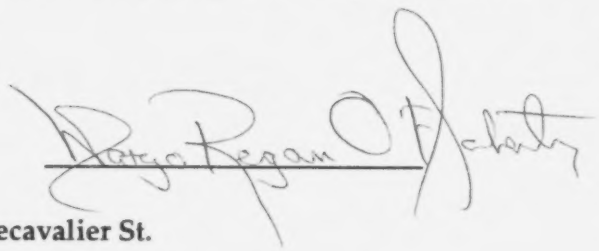

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Carl Hare

Carl Hare

James DeFelice

James DeFelice

Frederick Radford

APRIL 13, 1993

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Helen Elizabeth O'Regan and Joseph Peter O'Flaherty.

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of Brian Friel's play *Dancing At Lughnasa*, with specific reference to the carnivalesque element as it manifests itself in the play's dramaturgical and thematic composition. The introductory chapter traces the history of the practices of Carnival as they emanated from the seasonal fertility rites of various ancient cultures--all of which were assimilated by Christianity at a later date. It further identifies Mikhail Bakhtin as the twentieth century critic who designated the term "carnivalized literature" which draws on the actual occasions of revelry for its composition, but is also recognized as an entity within itself. Bakhtin's Carnival vocabulary ("crowning/uncrowning", "second life", "transformation downward") is applied firstly to the Irish Literary Renaissance (1898-1926) as the mainspring from which the tradition of *Dancing* is derived. The terms are subsequently applied to four selected plays of Friel between 1963 and 1987 and the context of Carnival is investigated in each play with respect to a dramaturgy that, as it becomes increasingly more diversified and complex, evolves from the verbal to the preverbal and visual.

Dancing At Lughnasa's presentational/representational structure is perceived as one which alternately engages and alienates the audience. The play is viewed as a dramaturgical culmination and a thematic departure with respect to Friel's prior works. A highly evolved, festive, multifaceted dramaturgy (form) explores the nature of ritual and celebration (content). The character of the priest in this play is seen as Friel's resolution to the tension between the official and the unofficial--a continual preoccupation in his former works. Conversely the social, economic and political status of women emerges as an entirely new topic--one which is shown to be intrinsic to the notion of Carnival. The thesis concludes that the play is carnivalesque as to both form and structure but that revolution in the lives of the particular characters (the story) does not emerge from this marriage. Dance/music as a metaphor for the underlying dynamics between/among the Irish characters addresses the other themes of failure, unfulfillment, powerlessness, but in so doing it equally addresses the possibility of community and

empowerment. The "international" or "universal" appeal of this particular play is thus ascribed to the vocabulary of the dance (movement) as one which precedes the parameters of any specific culture, Irish, African or whatever. The thesis finally concludes that this ambiguity of interpretation is integral to the notion of Carnival, which by definition concerns itself with the process of replacing, the refusal to concur with any fixed authority, the eternal question, rather than suggesting any definitive answer.

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Chapter One: Introduction to Carnival

> A field of golden wheat dotted with poppies tilts down from the horizon to the kitchen in the rural Donegal backwater where Brian Friel has set his masterpiece, *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The wheat evokes a sense of bounty and festival in this superb memory play, which stops time in 1936 to conjure out of the dutiful bravery of the five unmarried Mundy sisters a moment of fierce pagan joy. The radio in the corner of their family kitchen is the instrument of their liberation, corrupting their threadbare lives with pleasure through music and forcing an extraordinary collision between Christianity and paganism. At various times the sisters dance around the kitchen and in the field, and one character, a retired missionary, reflects on dance as the merging of the secular and the sacred--which is what Friel accomplishes in this play.
>
> "I think there's a need for the pagan in life," says Brian Friel, taking another drag on his cigar amid the din of a Dublin chophouse. "I don't think of it as disrupting Christianity. I think of it as disrupting civility. If too much obeisance is offered to manners, then in some way we lose or suppress the grumbling and dangerous beast that's underneath the ground. This denial is what causes the conflict." [1]

The above quotation is excerpted from the "Theater" section of *Vogue Arts* , October 1991. The article is an interview with the Irish playwright Brian Friel, and the subject of the interview is his latest play, *Dancing at Lughnasa*. The play opened at Dublin's Abbey Theatre, Tuesday, April 24, 1990 and subsequently went on to perform in London, opening first at the National Theatre in October of 1990 and later at the Phoenix in March of 1991. The same production opened at the Plymouth Theatre in New York City, October 24, 1991 with most of its original Irish cast still intact. In March

of 1992, the Irish actors returned to Ireland and were replaced by American actors who continued throughout the remainder of the run until closing on October 25, 1992. The play has been widely reviewed by both European and North American critics, and much attention has been paid in these reviews to the Christian /pagan "theme" of the play and to the dancing motif for which the play has been celebrated. Dancing, nor for that matter, singing and/or music, is not new to the work of Brian Friel--but this particular play is widely acknowledged as the zenith of his efforts in this dramaturgical direction. It is the purpose of this paper to explore these elements which I have labelled "carnivalesque" in the body of the playwright's work (mostly, his previous plays) and to trace their development and transformation (with implications for production/performance) up to, and including, the present production of *Dancing*. Because of its size, this thesis is not intended to be a full, comprehensive investigation of the carnivalesque elements in all his work. Rather, I have selected those elements most pertinent to the dramaturgy of *Dancing* and, again, have selected certain plays which I feel to be the best instances of them for exploration and comparison.

The dancing motif is inherently connected to the Christian/pagan theme of the play, and before dealing with the work of Brian Friel per se, it is necessary to investigate the relationship of Christianity to paganism. These two forces acting reciprocally, one on the other, have given rise to the festive occasion, celebration, ceremony, and finally performance as it has emanated from this complex relationship. This chapter will deal with the origin of the concept of Carnival and the concept of *carnivalized* literature as it was defined by Mikhail Bakhtin, the twentieth century Russian philosopher and critic. It will further deal with Carnival as it was apparent in the Renaissance, the period best known for its proliferation of carnivalized literature. Finally, with respect to Brian Friel and the specific theatrical tradition out of which he writes, it will deal with those aspects of Carnival which were remarkable in the period known as The Irish Literary Renaissance,[2] with reference to the theatrical practice of William Butler Yeats, the composition of the original Abbey theatre (the actors and the spaces in which they performed) and the performer-audience relationship.

The word "Carnival" is derived from the Latin words *carne,* meaning meat, and *vale,* meaning farewell. Hence the word translates as "farewell to meat". The early Christian Church coined the term to formally designate the period of license which preceded the forty days of fasting and abstinence culminating in the resurrection of Christ on Easter Sunday. The various practices and activities which came to be known as "Carnival", however, preceded the advent of Christianity by several centuries. The Greeks, the Romans, the Druids and the tribes of Northern Europe all engaged in seasonal rituals and/or festivals celebrated between the winter solstice and the vernal equinox, honoring their specific gods with relationship to the planting, the harvesting and the renewal of the earth. These various rites performed in honour of Dionysius (Greek), Saturn (Roman), Samhain (The Druids) and Frey (Northern Europe) were variously characterized by excessive eating, drinking, sexual activity, singing, dancing, the telling of lewd stories, disguising, masquerading, the blackening of faces, the exchanging of gifts, the inversion of status and sex roles, and the thrashing of women, a practice believed to promote fertility. Mock kings were elected by lots, temporarily ruling this insane, upside-down world, only to be put to death at the end of their reigns. These ritual orgies were believed to stimulate the cosmic forces, to wake up the spring, and to purify the community, preparing it for the passage into the New Year. Saturn, for example, in the Roman belief was recognized as a working god who presides over various agricultural tasks, especially the manuring of the fields and other activities connected with the sowing of the grain. His feast was believed to anticipate the growing, harvesting and eventual consuming of agricultural production and the renewal of human life.

The great similarities of these various mythic cosmologies made them naturally compatible, and Christianity, spreading as it did throughout all of Europe, became the common denominator. Despite the continuing campaign on the part of the Church to subvert what it considered "pagan" practices, these practices persisted, the result being that the Church itself became divided over the issue--with one faction who attempted to abolish these ancient rites entirely and another, less conservative, faction who sought a means of integrating these ancient, powerful rituals with the beliefs of the Church. Accordingly, the Church became increasingly

preoccupied with creating Christian equivalents of these practices to complete the liturgical calendar. The excesses of "paganism" could and would not be completely eradicated; hence the Church appropriated their discourse so that it might appear compatible with Christian ideals. The Eve of Samhain became Halloween or All Saints, the Lupercalia the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary, or Candlemas, and the Saturnalia became the Nativity. The Birth of Christ (Christmas) was thus fixed at the time of the winter solstice when the most celebrated of the festivals of the ancients was held in honour of the return of the sun which at the winter solstice begins gradually to regain power and to ascend apparently in the horizon. The promised restoration of light and commencement of a new era was therefore hailed with rejoicings and thanksgivings. The Feast of the Nativity was not integrated into the church calendar with any reference to the date of the actual incident it commemorated. The origin of Christmas, therefore, is both Christian and "pagan". The saints assumed the many powers of the old gods, such as the promotion of fertility, the growth and the revival of vegetation and protection at childbirth. Despite the fact, then, that the many ancient fertility rituals which came to be designated as Carnival preceded the advent of Christianity by several centuries, its essence and practices became inextricably identified with the Christian religion, specifically the Roman Catholic Church.[3]

With reference to the Renaissance and the advent of the Reformation, there was the subsequent disappearance of much carnival-like activity. The custom of the Christmas Lord of Misrule which we encounter in this period in the universities and Inns of Court, the Summer Kings and Queens and the keeping of "holiday" in general, represented the continuation of this tradition in spite of the official banns on it. These practices were viewed as "popish" and regarded as a subversive way for Catholicism and all it represented to reassert itself. But the festive practices did continue. The seasonal feasts were interpreted at that time as landmarks framing the cycle of the year, so that the particular nature of the festivities depended partly on the occasion celebrated--whether Easter, Whitsuntide, Midsummer or Christmas. Simpler occasions such as marriage feasts, harvest suppers, wakes and fairs also involved the making of mirth. It appears significant that the churchyard, because it served as the parish meeting place, was

commonly a centre for merry making, and in this fact we have another example of the connection between the church (whether Roman Catholic, or as now may have been the case, Reformist) and the celebration of holiday pastime. Philip Stubbes reveals an account of these revelries in his *Anatomie of Abuses*, and C. L. Barber in his study, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* points out that Stubbes speaks of these revels "just after denouncing the theaters and calls them "the other kind of plays, which you call Lords of Misrule:"

> First, all the wildheads of the parish, conventing together, choose them a grand captain (of all mischief) whom they ennoble with the title of "my Lord of Misrule", and him they crown with great solemnity, and adopt for their king. This king anointed chooseth forth twenty, forty, threescore or a hundred lusty guts, like to himself, to wait upon his lordly majesty and to guard his noble person. Then every one of these his men, he investeth with his liveries of green, yellow, or some other light wanton colour. And as though that were not [bawdy] gaudy enough, I should say, they bedeck themselves with scarves, ribbons and laces hanged all over with gold rings, precious stones, and other jewels. This done, they tie about either leg twenty or forty bells, with rich handkerchiefs in their hands, and sometimes laid across their shoulders and necks, borrowed for the most part of their pretty Mopsies, and loving Besses, for bussing them in the dark.
>
> Thus all things set in order, then have they their hobby-horses, dragons and other antiques [antics?] together with their bawdy pipes and thundering drummers to strike up the devil's dance withal. Then march these heathen company towards the church and churchyard, their pipers piping, their drummers thundering, their stumps dancing, their bells jingling, their handkerchiefs swinging about their heads like madmen, their hobbyhorses and other monsters skirmishing amongst the rout. And in this sort they go to the church (I say) and into the church (though the minister be at prayer or preaching) dancing and swinging their handkerchiefs over their heads in

> the church, like devils incarnate, with such a confused noise, that no man can hear his own voice. Then the foolish people they look, they stare, they laugh, they fleer, and mount upon forms and pews to see these goodly pageants solemnized in this sort.
>
> Then, after this, about the church they go again and again, and so forth into the churchyard, where they have commonly their summer halls, their bowers, arbors and banqueting houses set up, wherein they feast, banquet and dance all that day and (peradventure) all the night too. And thus these terrestrial furies spend the sabbath day.
>
> They have also certain papers, wherein is painted some babblery or other of imagery work, and these they call 'my Lord of Misrule's badges'. These they give to everyone that will give them money for them to maintain them in their heathenry,devilry,whoredom, drunkenness, pride and what not. And who will not be buxom to them and give them money for these their devilish cognizances, they are mocked and flouted at not a little. And so assotted are some, that they not only give them money to maintain their abomination withal, but also wear their badges and cognizances in their hats or caps openly.[4]

Regarding the *social occasions* of merriment we find, then, a pronounced connection between revelry and "holiday" (as opposed to everyday) and organized religion (which we might view as the "everyday", the official, the status quo). With respect to *literature*, specifically, *plays*, it is C. L. Barber's thesis in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* that the Comedies of Shakespeare draw on the *actual occasions* of holiday pastimes in themselves for their (the plays') own structure and ultimate composition. It is important to remember that this idea is not particular to the literature of the Elizabethan era, nor was it initiated by Shakespeare, who was in fact continuing in the "saturnalian" tradition of writers like Aristophanes, who in his comedies also drew on the *invocation* and *abuse* [5] composition of weddings and seasonal festivals and popular holidays of an earlier era. What makes the Elizabethan era significant in this discussion is the proliferation of dramatic literature notable from this time which may be

termed "carnivalized"--that is, permeated with such elements as excessive eating and drinking, dancing, music/singing, mime, gender and status switching, disguising, the giving of gifts and thrashing, both physical and verbal. The subversive laughter in literature of the period is further characterized by irony, humour and sometimes outright parody.

Carnival in the plays of the Renaissance has been interpreted by twentieth- century theorists in a variety of ways. C. L. Barber in *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy* sees mirthful release from everyday life as providing its participants with temporal immunity from the constraints of habitual authority, while ultimately seeking to reinforce this same authority. In Barber's view, the "release" of holiday and revelry provides its participants with a cathartic experience that brings about a heightened insight or "clarification" which allows for a new integration with, and affirmation of, the everyday. In this view Carnival becomes a "safety valve" with an ultimately conservative objective--the maintenance of the status quo--whether personal, social or political. This position appears to be in accordance with the thinking of the early Roman Catholic Church, who, as we have seen, permitted and ultimately encouraged Carnival-like activity in transforming the seasonal festivals into the Liturgical Calendar of the Church for the express purpose of the sustenance and spreading of Christianity. The Russian writer Mikhailovich Bakhtin (1895-1975) chose to interpret it as a revolutionary expression emanating from the populace. It was also he who originally coined the term *carnivalized literature* and recognized this as a literary entity within itself. It was his interest in folk culture coupled with his interest in the structure of language and semiotics that propelled him into an examination of laughter and the comical which he felt had been prohibited in the epoch prior to the Renaissance. He perceived the serio-comic as a genre distinctly opposed to the tragedy and to classical rhetoric. With regard to antiquity he felt the serio-comic encompassed the mimes of Sophron, the voluminous literature of the Symposiasts, bucolic poetry, Menippian satire and the Socratic dialogue:

> True, in all the serio-comical genres there is a strong rhetorical element, but that element is radically altered in the atmosphere of *jolly*

> *relativity* of the carnival attitude; its one-sided rhetorical seriousness, rationality, singleness of meaning and dogmatism are made weaker. . . . We shall give the name *carnivalized literature* to those genres which have come under the influence either directly or indirectly, through a series of intermediary links--of one or another variant of carnivalistic folklore (ancient or medieval). The whole realm of the serio-comical is the first example of such literature. It is our opinion that the problem of the carnivalization of literature is one of the most important problems of the historical poetics and of the poetics of genre in particular.[6]

One of the most interesting examples he gives of "carnivalized literature" as the epitome of the serio-comic genre is the "Socratic Dialog". He insists that, contrary to traditional interpretation, it is emphatically not a rhetorical genre--that it grew out of a carnivalistic folk foundation and is deeply imbued with the carnivalistic attitude, particularly in the oral Socratic stage of its development. He cites the original nucleus of this genre as the folkloristic "debate" between life and death, darkness and life, summer and winter, etc. He envisions it as a debate permeated with the pathos of change and jolly relativity which did not allow thought to stand still and grow cold in one-sided seriousness, useless exactness and singleness of meaning. This distinguishes the Socratic Dialog both from the purely rhetorical dialogue and from the tragic dialogue:

> The Socratic concept of the dialogical nature of truth and of human thought about it lies at the foundation of the genre. The dialogical means of seeking the truth is counterposed to the *official* monologism which claims *to possess the ready-made truth;* and it is counterposed to the naive self-confidence of people who think that they know something i.e. who think that they possess certain truths. The truth is not born and does not reside in the head of an individual person; it is born of the dialogical intercourse *between people* in the collective search for the truth. Socrates called himself a "pander": he brought people together and caused them to collide in a dispute as

> a result of which the truth was born; in relation to this newborn truth Socrates called himself a "midwife", because he assisted with the birth. For this reason he called his method an "obstetric" one. But Socrates never called himself the exclusive possessor of ready-made truth. We would emphasize the Socratic concepts of the dialogical nature of truth lay at the carnivalistic folk foundations of the "socratic" dialog genre and determined its *form*, but are by no means always represented in the content of the individual dialogs. The content often took on a monological character which contradicted the genre's form-determining idea **(Bakhtin, *Poetics* 90).**

The essence of the "Socratic Dialog" as Bakhtin interprets it serves as a model for his subsequent theory of Carnival. The inherent features of Carnival that he underscores are its emphatic and purposeful *heteroglossia* [7] and its multiplicity of styles. Dialogue so conceived is opposed to the "authoritarian" word in the same way carnival is opposed to the official culture. Hence he conceives of Carnival as a "second" life or "second culture". Michael Bristol in *Carnival and Theater* explains it as follows:

> Bakhtin describes Carnival as a "second life" or "second culture" sustained by the common people or plebeian community throughout the Middle Ages and well into the early modern period. During the Renaissance, this culture engages with and directly opposes the "official" culture, both in literature and in the public life of the marketplace and city square. The "enobled language" of official ideology, official religion and high literature becomes saturated with the language of everyday productive life. The genre of literature become "Carnivalized", their structures permeated with laughter, irony, humour, elements of self-parody, and finally--this is the most important thing--Carnival inserts into these structures an indeterminacy, a certain semantic openendedness, a living contact with unfinished, still-evolving contemporary reality.
>
> . . . . . .

> By bringing privileged symbols and officially authorized concepts into a crudely familiar relationship with common everyday experience, Carnival achieves a transformation downward or "uncrowning" of dejure relations of dependancy, expropriation and social discipline. The basic principle of grotesque or Carnival realism is to represent everything socially and spiritually exalted on the material, bodily level. This includes cursing, abusive and irreverent speech, symbolic and actual thrashing and images of inversion and downward movement, both cosmological (the underworld, hell, devils) and anatomical (the buttocks, genitalia, visceral functions). The transformation downward and reinterpretation of the social world is moreover cyclical. Uncrowning, devouring and death are always linked to rebirth and social renewal. Carnival images reflect the material needs of the organized human collectivity. The bowels study the world in order to subjugate it. [8]

He also extends Bakhtin's concept of Carnival as revolution when he says:

> The vocabulary of Carnival and the Carnivalesque is the "other" form of knowledge, a comprehensive "art and science" of social and collective life. Clowning, devilment, abusive and summary popular justice, hospitality and entertainment, and the deployment of Carnival artifacts such as masks and giants are the tactical instruments of a resourceful collectivity with an active and independant will to sustain itself. Carnival is put into operation as resistance to any tendency to absolutize authority and to the disruptive radicalizations of social life proposed and implemented by powerful ruling elites. The resistance is purposeful, and proceeds with the ethical imperatives of plebeian culture.
> **(*Bristol* 213)**

C. L. Barber's interpretation of Carnival as a safety-valve and the Bakhtin/Bristol concept of it as revolution are only two of the many explanations offered to explain/interpret this phenomenon. In the spring edition of the Journal of English Literary History, Richard Wilson in his article "Is This a Holiday?: Shakespeare's Roman Carnival" refutes the Bakhtin/Bristol thesis. One of the limitations of both Bakhtin and Bristol is that neither of them address the celebration of Carnival by the aristocrats while Barber makes it clear that holiday was celebrated by all levels of society. It is not the purpose of this thesis to debate the merits or limitation of any particular viewpoint. Rather I have chosen to isolate Bakhtin/Bristol's concepts (vocabulary) of "uncrowning",[9] "transformation downward" (Bristol) and "second life" as I believe these terms in the context of Carnival may be applied fruitfully to the Irish Literary Renaissance in the performance and reception of its plays. I further believe that this particular dramatic expression and theatrical history is inextricably linked to the particular political context of Ireland having been dominated by foreign political rule for seven centuries. This history made that country in and of itself a subject for the carnivalesque, an "unofficial culture" and a "second life" in its very entity. I further believe it is possible to interpret the "pagan" pastimes in which all five Mundy sisters engage in Brian Friel's *Dancing At Lughnasa* as reflective of Barber's theory of temporary immunity from the status quo, the better to serve the status quo. This will be the subject of a later chapter. We must first look at the specific Irish tradition of "otherness", replete with multiplicity of expression and many-voiced, from which Brian Friel's work emanates.

Carnival in the Irish Literary Renaissance

In the Saturday, December 29, 1990 edition of *The Irish Times* Fintan O'Toole in an article entitled "Mummer's the word" celebrates the work of American anthropologist Henry Glassie in his book on the mumming tradition in Ulster, *All Silver and No Brass*. At the same time he laments the lack of attention in twentieth century Irish theatre history to the native tradition of mumming, the popular theatre of the people:

> The people who probably ought to have discovered it in Ireland were Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory, who specifically and with great seriousness of purpose set out to discover what the folk culture around them was and how they could use it to make something new and of their own time. There were reasons why they didn't take much notice of the folk drama that was around them. In the first place it wasn't Gaelic or western, which is what they thought they were looking for: it is English and French in origin, Protestant as much as Catholic, Wexford and Fermanagh more than Connemara or Mayo. In the second place, they set out on the premise that there was no native Irish theatre, forgetting that theatre doesn't have to happen in theatres. The mummers' plays might be performed 30 times a night, for 10 nights running and seen every year throughout a lifetime. Not the same thing at all as an original play written to be seen once, maybe twice, in a public building in a town or city; but nonetheless theatre for all that. . . .
>
> Cultural history is as much a matter of the things that weren't chosen, as it is of the ones that were. That Yeats and Synge and Lady Gregory took us on a particularly fine boulevard doesn't mean that there were not stranger, wilder paths which might have been explored. One way or another, it is important that we get away from the notion that Irish theatre only really began in the 1890's and recognise that a good deal of that history has been other than literary.[10]

Thus far we have considered Carnival from the point of view of both the *actual festive occasions* and the *literature* which derived its composition from such occasions. Fintan O'Toole is suggesting that the key figures in what was to become known as the Irish Literary Renaissance managed to overlook a whole body of folk culture, a "theatre", as he puts it, that was not necessarily performed in a theatre. He is juxtaposing this "theatre" with the "literary" theatre of the period with which we are more familiar. But as we have seen thus far, literary compositions can be considered "carnivalesque" as well as the actual occasions from which they are derived, and I am suggesting that the literature of the early Irish

Renaissance as well as the actual theatrical history and practice of that period may be considered to reflect the "second" life, the heteroglossia, the multiplicity of styles, of which Bakhtin speaks. It may be possible to look at this period in Irish theatrical history, now, at a distance of ninety years as the "fine boulevard" O'Toole has in mind, but the principles of "uncrowning" and "transformation downward" were implicit in its inception. In its very heart, it provides us with a perfect example of the unofficial culture (peasant theatre) engaging with the official culture (conventional theatre) of its time. In short, there was a good part of The Irish Literary Renaissance that was not in fact "literary". In attempting to explore the "carnivalesque" element with respect to The Irish Literary Renaissance I have selected three factors here for consideration: the dramatic literature and theatrical production of William Butler Yeats, the actual physical origins of the first Abbey theatre with reference to the original actors, spaces and audiences, and the riots attendant on the Abbey opening of J. M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*.

Yeats' Carnivalesque Legacy

The last quarter of the nineteenth century was one of protest in Europe against established religion, social and political institutions, and theories of education, art and language. Charles Darwin had introduced his theory of evolution involving the origin of the species, Karl Marx had written *Das Kapital*, and Sigmund Freud's new psychology of the unconscious emphasized the importance of the dream and free association. Nationalist fervor was very high in Ireland at the end of the nineteenth century, following seven centuries of foreign political domination. This great awakening of political consciousness served as the central thrust into what was to become known as The Irish Literary Renaissance. There was a reawakening of interest in the Gaelic language and in the myths and stories of the Irish Heroic Age. In Ireland, William Butler Yeats, playwright, was in quest of a theatrical style as an alternative to the realism which dominated the stage of the time. In 1900 he wrote an essay entitled "The Symbolism of Poetry", declaring Symbolism to be the only movement that was saying new things. He was in revolt against the English theatre of his time and claimed this was not a reflection of his Nationalism, but rather, a reaction against the

theatrical conventions prevalent in the English theatre: bold characterization, vigorous dialogue and realistic costumes and sets. He disliked the drama of Ibsen and Shaw, which he felt dealt with contemporary problems and saw the content of these plays as social more then human. Speaking of this theatre, the critic Arthur Symons wrote:

> Mr. Shaw is a mind without a body, a whimsical intelligence without a soul. He is one of those tragic buffoons who play with eternal things, not only for the amusement of the crowd, but because an uneasy devil capers in their own brains. He is a merry preacher, a petulant critic, a great talker. It is partly because he is an Irishman that he has transplanted the art of talking to the soil of the stage: Sheridan, Wilde, Shaw, our only modern comedians, all Irishmen, all talkers. It is by his astonishing skill of saying everything that comes into his head, with a spirit really intoxicating, that Mr. Shaw has succeeded in holding the stage with undramatic plays, in which there is neither life nor beauty. Life gives up its wisdom only to reverence, and beauty is jealous of neglected altars. But those who amuse the world, no matter by what means, have their place in the world at any given moment. Mr. Shaw is a clock striking the hour.[11]

The Symbolist movement was an attempt on the part of theatre artists to integrate, for the sake of performance, various arts: mime, music, dancing and poetry. Maeterlinck began using marionettes in his plays and experimented with the use of mime in his production of *The Bluebird*. His *Pelleas and Melisande* in 1892 experimented with both visual and musical effects, and dance was central to Oscar Wilde's *Salome* in 1893. Stephen Mallarme experimented with putting his poems to music, and Arthur Symons proposed what he called a technique of total theatre--incorporating dance, mime, song and words--specifically poetry. In his essay, "A Theory of the Stage", Symons set forth his idea of the new theatre which he felt would dislodge the prevailing realism of the English stage, a theatre which would allow movement, mime and dance to prevail over the spoken word (the

contemporary fashion) and a theatre which, when words were resorted to, would turn to poetry rather than prose:

> The foundation of drama is that part of the action which can be represented in dumb show. Only the essential parts of action can be represented without words, and you would set the puppets vainly to work on any material but that which is common to humanity. The permanence of a drama might be tested by the continuance and universality of its appeal when played silently in gestures. I have seen the test applied. Companies of marionette players still go about the villages of Kent, and among their stock pieces is *Arden of Feversham*, the play which Shakespeare is not too great to have written, at some moment when his right hand knew not what his left hand was doing. Well, that great little play can hold the eyes of every child and villager, as the puppets enact it; and its power has not gone out of it after three centuries. Dumb show apes the primal forces of nature, and is inarticulate, as they are; until relief gives words. When words come, there is no reason why they should not be in verse, for only in verse can we render what is deepest in humanity of the utmost beauty. Nothing but beauty should exist on the stage. Visible beauty comes with the ballet, an abstract thing; gesture adds pantomime, with which drama begins; and then words bring in the speech by which life tries to tell its secret **(Symons,"Theory" 339-340).**

In 1899, Yeats, along with Lady Gregory, George Moore, Edward Martyn, Maude Gonne and J.M. Synge, formed the Irish Literary Theatre. In his essay "A People's Theatre",Yeats himself outlines his ideal theatre:

> I want to create for myself an unpopular theatre and an audience like a secret society where admission is by favour and never to many. Perhaps I shall never create it, for you and I and Synge have had to dig the stone for our statue and I am aghast at the sight of a new quarry, and besides I want so much--an audience of fifty, a

> room worthy of it (some great dining-room or drawing room), half a dozen young men and women who can dance and speak verse or play drum and flute and zither, and all the while, instead of a profession I but offer them "an accomplishment". However, there are my *Four Plays for Dancers* as a beginning, some masks by Mr. Dulac, music by Mr. Dulac and by Mr. Rummell. In most towns one can find fifty people for whom one need not build all on observation and sympathy, because they read poetry for their pleasure and understand the traditional language of passion. I desire a mysterious art, always reminding and half-reminding those who understand it of dearly loved things, doing its work by suggestion, not by direct statement, a complexity of rhythm, colour, gesture, not space-pervading like the intellect, but a memory and a prophecy: a mode of drama Shelley and Keats could have used without ceasing to be themselves, and for which even Blake in the mood of *The Book of Thel* might not have been too obscure....As a drawing is defined by its outline and taste by its rejections, I too must reject and draw an outline about the thing I seek; and say that I seek, not a theatre, but the theatre's anti-self, an art that can appease all within us that becomes uneasy as the curtain falls and the house breaks into applause.[12]

Katharine Worth, in her study *The Irish Theatre of Europe from Yeats to Becket*, points out that while Yeats was indeed influenced by the literary tradition of the Symbolists, the polytheatricality for which his productions were celebrated owed much to the influence of the designer Gordon Craig with respect to his use of screens, marionettes, masks, light and colour. She credits the French with supplying Yeats with his ideas for his theatre and Craig for helping him to put them into practice. She repeatedly points to the "dialogic" (not her word) tension within Yeats whereby he strove to work within an ancient tradition but, in fact, was experimental and iconoclastic in his practice. His plays have been celebrated for their exultation of the spiritual side of man and are not carnivalesque in

the parodic--travestying comic tradition which we have come to associate with the word. Neither did they seek to address the grievances of the working classes. Nevertheless the productions of these plays were imbued with a polytheatricality, a multiplicity of *visual* and *audial* forms which we have come to associate with literary or theatrical carnival. This literary and theatrical tradition because of Yeats' experiments marked a decided contribution or "second life" to the repertory of the Abbey whose primary reputation rested on the realism of its productions. It is Ms. Worth's contention that this polytheatrical tradition which found its inception in the verse plays of Yeats formed the basis for Sean O'Casey's experiments with theatrical form in such politically oriented plays as *The Silver Tassie* and *Red Roses for Me.* She quotes O'Casey in his foreward to a volume of his plays, *Blasts and Benedictions* :

> In a number of his plays, Yeats, the poet, brings in music from flute, zither, drum and gong--elegant sounds, and beautiful too. I, too, have tried to bring in the music of the flute, the fiddle, and the drum; not in the actual instruments, not through them, but by an occcasional song, and by the lilt in the dialogue; by weaving into the emotional action of the plays the shrill or plaintive notes of the flute and the reckless rally that the drums of life so often give. [13]

She goes on to point out that music was, in fact, only one of the elements in his plays that O'Casey inherited from the Yeatsian legacy and that the use of masks and particularly of dance was especially evident in the playwright's later works:

> Perhaps the impact made by Yeats on his imagination shows most obviously in O'Casey's adoption of dance as a vital element in his own technique. From *The Silver Tassie* onwards most of the major plays contain a dance which often has the same function as Yeat's dances, namely to reveal the psychic forces at work behind the forms of the external world. In two of the plays, *Oak Leaves and Lavender* (Lyric, 13, May 1947) and *Cock-a-Doodle Dandy*, the debt to Yeats is

> especially clear, for the dancers are supernatural beings, thin ghosts of the past in one, and in the other a fantastic bird, "the joyful, active spirit of life as it weaves a way through the Irish scene" (*Blasts and Benedictions*, p. 144). The first play which demands to be thought of as a dance play is *Within the Gates* (Royalty, 7 February 1934) with its insistent musicality and its extraordinary climax when the heroine dances herself to death in Hyde Park, urged on by the Nietzchean Dreamer to assert her will against the defeatism of the Down and Outs: "Sing them silent; dance them still, and laugh them into an open shame!" But even in *The Silver Tassie*, where the mode, except in one act, is more naturalistic, a complex pattern of contrasts between free and fettered movements runs through the whole play and comes to a bitter climax with the boisterous waltz in which all join at the end except the wrecks of war, the paralysed man in who was once a footballer and the blinded man whose function must now be to push the wheelchair of his crippled comrade. In the Royal Shakespeare Company's production of the play in 1969, the departure of the two from the dance of life--blind man pushing paralysed man--was exceptionally moving, its bleak realism modified by the stylisation which suggested they might, like Yeats's Lame and Blind Beggars, patch up a whole life by complementing each other's deficiencies. **(Worth 227)**

In *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama* 1891-1980, D.E.S. Maxwell comments that Katharine Worth conceives of Yeats' plays in their "total theatre" as influencing not only O'Casey, but Beckett, Pinter, Edward Bond, "indeed the modernist-contemporary stage as a whole":[14] Ms. Worth sums up Yeats' iconoclastic carnivalesque legacy to the twentieth century theatre:

> When *At the Hawk's Well* was given its first performance in 1916 in Lady Cunard's drawing-room, the audience were seeing "theatre in the round" fifty years before the term came into general use. The opening of the action was

> represented by the Musicians' unfolding of the black cloth with its stylised hawk's motif; the actors were played in through the audience with drum beats and the action brought to its end by the folding of the cloth, all done in full view of the audience **(Worth 61).**

The Abbey: A Carnivalesque History

The multifarious expression in the theatre of Yeats, which can be considered to have "uncrowned" the realism of the time, is only one consideration of the carnivalesque in the theatre of the Irish Literary Renaissance and its legacy for future Irish writers like O'Casey. The actual physical conditions under which the first Abbey theatre was founded bring to mind Bakhtin's theory of uncrowning /destruction for the purpose of renewal/new life. Indeed, there is a "dialogic" relationship to be found between the founders of the theatre--William Butler Yeats, Lady Augusta Gregory and the playwright J. M. Synge, all three of whom belonged to the Anglo-Protestant "ascendancy" class--the aristocrats of turn-of the century Ireland and the actual Abbey company of actors and directors, the majority of whom were Roman Catholic and poor. In *The Fays Of The Abbey Theatre,* an autobiographical record by William Fay of the early days of the Abbey, the author is at pains to point out that:

> The Abbey Theatre was first and foremost a *theatrical* not a literary movement. It was the creation not of men of letters but of actors. It is true that it discovered many dramatists of ability, and at least one, J. M. Synge, of genius, who, being, men of letters, appeal to other men of letters and so have received their full meed of praise which nobody grudges them. But the playwrights, were, so to speak, a supervening phenomenon. It was the zeal of the players that provided the conditions in which they were able to emerge. We were not literary men. Most of us were humble folk who had to live by hard and humdrum toil. What bound us together was enthusiasm for the art of acting.[15]

The literary activities of the Irish Literary Renaissance did not much affect Willie and Frank Fay, who considered themselves to be outside that "class" of people. The Fays came from a Roman Catholic family, their father worked in the civil service and no one in their family had any prior connections with the theatre whatsoever. Both brothers were self-taught, William having read the plays of Fletcher, Marlowe, Dekker and the Restoration comedies before he was eighteen. His brother Frank acquired from an early age an extensive knowledge of the history of speech and acting and devoted much time to the development of his voice. Both were sixpenny attenders at the Gaiety Theatre, where from an early age they saw Herbert Tree, Mr. and Mrs. Kendall and Edward Compton. Both were frequenters of the Dublin Music Hall, unbeknownst to their parents, for it was not considered "respectable" entertainment. In his early years, William Fay toured the Irish provinces with plays such as *The Collen Bawn* and *Green Bushes* as well as travelling with a group called Lloyd's Mexican Circus:

> I learned and saw more of Ireland travelling with Lloyd's Mexican Circus than I did with all the dramatic companies I had toured with before put together. Some, at least, of the knowledge, I gathered was to be of practical value afterwards, when I had to produce at the Abbey Theatre, plays written about many different parts of the country from Galway to Cork. **(Fay 91).**

It was the subject of Irish actors and the training of them (previous to this, Yeats had been using English actors in Irish plays) that brought the Fays and their Ormond Dramatic Society into contact with Yeats and the Irish Literary Theatre, and together they went on to produce plays such as Yeats' *Kathleen Ni Houlihan* and George Russell's *Deidre*. The two plays were performed on the same bill on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of April, 1902, and William Fay both directed the play and painted the scenery. Despite the adulation of the Irish audiences, however, lack of funds and no permanent space in which to perform plagued the company. The Irish National Theatre Society was formed with Yeats as President and space was finally

found in Lower Camden Street--a hall in a woeful state of dilapidation which consisted of four bare walls and a roof, without platform or seats. There was no heating and no dressing rooms, the actors having to make up in the wings. The actors themselves built the stage and the scenery. All of this activity went on in the evenings for the entire company was employed in various shops and factories by day. In December, 1902 they opened with *The Laying of the Foundations* by Fred Ryan, *A Pot of Broth* by Yeats, *The Racing Lug* by James Cousins and a play in Gaelic by P.T. McGinley called *Eilis And The Beggar Woman*.

> It was not a very successful opening. After the reception of *Deidre* we expected more than we got. The hall was cold and so was the audience, if you could call the few that turned up an audience. The roof leaked. The stage was so small you couldn't swing a kitten, let alone a cat. On the Saturday night we had trouble in getting our audience into the hall. The shops on either side of our entrance were a provision dealer on the left and a butcher on the right. Saturday being their busy day, large boxes of eggs encroached upon our entrance on the one side, while the butcher crowded the other with the half of a large cow that nearly touched the egg boxes. The result was that those members of the public who were courageous enough to support us had to get in by slipping sideways between the eggs and the beef. One lady remarked to her excort as she slithered past the carcase: "Well, ye told me that Mr. Yeats was queer, but this is the queerest theatre that I ever saw." The Press was rough and rude. One man wrote to the newspapers complaining that we did not give him upholstered fauteuils! "Why," he exclaimed indignantly, "should the Muse of Irish Drama hold her levee in surroundings that would spell bankruptcy for a penny gaff? Why should she declaim from a stage which is not a stage, surrounded with scenery, which is not scenery (one for me who had painted it!), to an audience that is cultivating rheumatism or pains in the spinal column on seats that have no backs? I may be told that it is classic simplicity. I answer it is merely downright commonplace

discomfort, which not even a red-hot enthusiast would endure for long" **(Fay 125-126)**.

The building in which the Society finally found a permanent home, which later come to be known as the Abbey Theatre, has an equally "carnivalesque" history. Originally called the Theatre Royal Opera house, it was built in 1820 and destroyed in a fire. The area surrounding Marlborough Street, where it stood, was considered circa 1820 to be quite elegant and its patronage came from the lords and ladies of the aristocracy who had townhouses in Rutland, Mountjoy and Merrion Squares. After the building burned, however, a new Mechanics' Institute was erected on the site and in 1870 a man named Pat Langan rented the premises and opened it under the name The People's Music Hall. The building then passed through various hands and degenerated into an establishment which produced a regular run of cheap artists and into more of a boxing gymnasium than a theatre. "It had degenerated so low socially that no decent person would care to be seen entering there."[16] In 1901 another transformation was affected. A Mr. J. B. Carrickford and Madame Louise Grafton opened its doors as a dramatic house with a company composed mostly of old English stock actors and gave it the prophetic name of The National Theatre. These two people were credited with lifting the theatre from obscurity and oblivion. "They catered for the poorer classes. . . . But they attracted also the educated class who at one time had ignored this house and looked upon it as fit only for the scum of the slums" **(Byrne 43).** The site then appears as though it might have regained a certain respectability; nevertheless the area in which the Abbey Theatre found itself housed continued to be referred to by the Irish Press as the "unfashionable" side of town. Immediately prior to the Abbey's first opening night, it was decided to annex the adjoining structure, at one time used as a morgue, in order to provide the necessary exits and dressing rooms in accordance with the then-existing regulation of the Fire Code. The theatre derived its name from the street in which it stood, which in turn derived its name from St. Mary's Abbey, an old monastery which existed in the Cromwellian days and may have been destroyed at that time. On December 27th, 1904, the curtain was rung up for the first time. The evening consisted of three one-act plays, Yeats' *On Baile's Strand*, Lady Gregory's

comedy, *Spreading the News*, and a revival of *Kathleen Ni Houlihan*. "It was certainly a very little place. The auditorium with its one circle, had a seating capacity of 500 only, and the acting area was about 20 feet by 15. But it was admirably equipped and suited us to perfection" **(Fay 162).**

The initial funding for the Abbey theatre came from a Ms. A. E. Horniman, an Englishwoman who was avidly passionately about dramatic art and equally passionate in her distaste for the Irish Nationalism of the period. The contributions of the aristocractic William Butler Yeats and Lady Gregory have been well documented in Irish theatrical history. Nevertheless, it is important to remember that the amount of money Ms. Horniman was able to contribute was indeed very small. In Ms. Horniman's own words: "I can only afford to make a very little theatre and it must be quite simple. You all must do the rest to make it a powerful and prosperous theatre with a high artistic ideal" **(Fay 158).** It is equally important take note of the enormous contribution the Fay brothers made in the formation of the company and to recognize that The Irish National Dramatic Company who formed the nucleus of what was to become Ireland's National Theatre might be characterized as a small group of working class people who not only performed and directed the plays but built the sets and painted the scenery as well. They performed first in cramped, freezing spaces, surrounded by the daily leftovers of the butcher next door, and second, in a building whose history was not only socially inferior but also a combination of many different "carnivalesque" elements--a boxing gymnasium, a morgue and a church. And there was also, not insignificantly, the issue of the audience.

<u>The Playboy Carnival</u>

The problem of the audience continued to plague the Abbey for a very long time in its formative years. Yeats had set out to create what he termed an "unpopular" theatre and succeeded in some ways, in doing just that. Prior to 1907 riots for *The Playboy of the Western World*, J. M. Synge's play *In The Shadow of the Glen* in 1903 had provoked a hurricane of abuse from the Dublin audiences. In February, 1905, Synge's *The Well of the Saints* met with much the same reception as *In The Shadow Of the Glen*. The great

majority of audiences who saw it abhorred it as a criticism of the Irish people and as an attack on their religion. A satricial comedy called *The Building Fund* by a writer named William Boyle--a play described as being nearer the ordinary play of the commercial theatre than anything done up to that time--elicited a far more positive response from the audiences than the experimental offerings of Yeats and Synge. On the subject of the lack of fellowship between the playwrights of the Abbey and their audiences, Lady Gregory wrote:

> But building up an audience is a slow business where there is anything unusual in the methods or the work. Often, near midnight, after the theatre had closed, I have gone round to the newspaper offices, asking as a favour that notices might be put in, for we could pay for but few advertisements and it was not always thought worthwhile to send a critic to our plays. Often I have gone out by the stage door when the curtain was up, and come round into the auditorium by the front hall, hoping that in the dimness I might pass for a new arrival, and so to encourage the few scattered people in the stalls. One night there were so few in any part of the house that the players were for dismissing them and giving no performance at all. But we played after all and just after the play began, three or four priests from the country came in. A friend of theirs and of the Abbey had gone beyond the truth in telling them it was not a real theatre. They came round afterwards and told us how good they thought the work was and asked the company to come down and play in the West. Very often in the green room have I quoted the homely proverb, heard I know not where,"Grip is a good dog, but Hold Fast a better!" [17]

When William Fay first read the script for *The Playboy of the Western World* he apparently repeatedly tried to convince Synge to excise certain passages, to make Pegeen more likeable, and to cut the scene where the peasants burn Christy Mahon with the lit turf. But to no avail. The first act

went splendidly but the entrance of the Widow Quin and the advent of the words "bloody" and "shift", met with immediate hisses and cat-calls. By the time of the final curtain the uproar had become a riot. There were fights in the stall and the orchestra conductor had his face damaged. At one point it looked as if the stage would be stormed. This was on Saturday. By Monday it had been arranged that the cast should simply walk through the play not speaking the words aloud, but changing positions and going though all the motions. The noise was deafening and by Thursday evening, the police had been called and the floor had been padded with felt to frustrate the rhymic stamping of feet. William Fay concludes "Thus we were able once more to speak the lines, but our reputation as an Irish National Institution was ruined" **(Fay 216).** Joseph Holloway, a frequenter of the early Abbey plays, describes the riots in his 1907 Journal:

> *Saturday, February 2* . . . After dinner I went to the matinee at the Abbey, and found the police in large numbers around the building. The first act had concluded as I went in. Everything was quiet and matinee-like inside, except the number of police lining the walls and blocking up the passages. The audience was not very large and mostly ladies. W.B. Yeats came and had a few words with me about the arrest last night, and I told him what I thought of it and others, and also of the drunken Trinity students of Tuesday night.
>
> He replied, "There were plenty of drunken men in the pit, and I prefer drunken men who applaud on in the right than drunken men who hiss in the wrong." A beautiful sentiment worthy of his pal Synge, I thought.
>
> When I pressed him further about the freedom of every man to judge for himself, and yet if a man hissed or left the theatre before the play was over he was likely to be taken, he fled. He would not work in the art-for-art's-sake theory into an answer to that question, and so his flowers of speech did not blossom on the subject. "Humbug," thy name is Yeats.[18]

The *Playboy* riots constitute the single most important event in the life of the original Abbey theatre. Synge had met with opposition before, and once again the objections to the play were grounded in the manner in which he had written about the Irish peasantry--without illusion and without sentiment. It is interesting to speculate about the violent reaction of the Irish audiences to material in which they felt they were being maligned. Fay offers a partial explanation in saying that the Gaels, having never had a theatre of their own before and therefore having no understanding of the functions and values of the stage, did not have sufficient sophistication to appreciate satire, especially when it was directed at them. They lacked, in other words, the ability to simply see a play as a play. In the light of that remark, the audience response seems more comprehensible, almost as if their reaction or the lack of what would have been considered a more "appropriate" reaction could be regarded as an inevitable step in a their theatrical coming of age.

It is not really possible, however, to separate the Irish audience of 1907 from their particular political context, their quest for independance, for nationhood, coming out of their history as a colonized country. If the *Playboy* did not elicit the reactions it sought for its own sake as a piece of theatre, it unwittingly provided the Irish people with the opportunity to become actors themselves-to use both the occasion of the play and the Abbey space, endowed as it was with its nationalistic significance and combative, "second-life" history, as a medium for exploring their own national identity. We have seen that Yeats's plays were an attempt to "uncrown" the prevalent realism of the English stage of the period. But the attempt on the part of the early Abbey theatre, its first spaces, actors and audiences, to cast off, overthrow, innovate, transcend, encompasses a wider dimension than that of the purely theatrical. In a sense, during the riots we have the audience becoming the performers with the pandemonium and the stamping and the performers becoming the audience--forced into the position of the spectator, confined for several evenings to going through the motions of the play, but unable to speak because they knew they would not be heard. After the initial performace, the curtain was rung up to organized demonstrations. The "show", so to speak, was in the house and not on the stage. This provides a classic reversal of the usual "roles" of both actors and

audience, and a primary instance of the actual play providing the occasion for another kind of "play". The original *Playboy* performance might be the "pander" Socrates refered to, the catalyst which unwittingly provided the Irish people with the opportunity, the occasion and the space in which to explore an intrinsically Irish "theatre" that might be regarded as utterly separate from any particular play they might see on stage. The one "theatre" elicited quite another. The original intention of the Abbey might have been to provoke in the name of art and intellectual stimulation and even to provide "provocative" entertainment, but it did more than that. It succeeded in bringing to the fore the "acting out" of a highly charged national consciousness of an Irish audience *in response* to an Irish play written by an Irish writer and performed with Irish actors in an Irish theatre--all novel, ground-breaking, innovative factors of performance at that time. We are reminded here once again, of Bakhtin:

> . . . the basic carnival nucleus of this culture is by no means a purely artistic form nor a spectacle and does not, generally speaking belong to the sphere of art. It belongs to the borderline between art and life. In reality it is life itself, but shaped according to a certain pattern or play. In fact, Carnival does not know footlights, in the sense that it does not acknowledge any distinction between actors and spectators. Footlights would destroy a carnival, as the absence of footlights would destroy a theatrical performance. Carnival is not a spectacle seen by the people; they live in it and every one participates because its very idea embraces all people.[19]

The Irish Literary Renaissance, then, provided ample instances (literary and otherwise) for the "carnivalesque" to flourish in the theatrical life of the period. We have the inception of the iconclastic Yeatsian theatre replete with song, dance, music, mime, and masks which generally did not find favour with its first audiences but whose example influenced both Irish and other writers of subsequent generations. We have the making of a National Theatre which originated with aristocratic playwrights and working-class actors and a theatre whose physical origins were once described as "fit for the scum of the slums" and whose artistic offerings produced one of the

most infamous theatrical riots of the twentieth century. It is possible that Yeats and Lady Gregory did not explore the native folk drama of Ireland. It is equally true that there are other factors to consider in the shaping of the Irish Literary Renaissance other than the carnivalesque--the *practices* of English actors, for instance, which, looking at Dublin with its long history of English touring companies, must have been inevitable, no matter their "Irish" mandate. The Fay brothers were also admirers of Ibsen, the Theatre Libre of Henri Antoine, and the great French actor, Coquelin. Indeed it is the Abbey theatre's tradition of realism and their development of a realistic acting style that is its most identifiable characteristic in theatre history. I have chosen here to isolate those elements of The Irish Literary Renaissance which emphasize another "second" aspect of the movement other than the literary one with which we are readily familiar--to relocate it , so to to speak, in the context of its first actors, spaces, audiences and plays, long before the Abbey Theatre was conceived of as Ireland's National Theatre. I have deliberately selected this period as a focus on the "carnivalesque"element in Irish theatrical history because I believe its political context made it inherently carnivalesque so that the dramatic expression of that situation would follow the same direction. *Nevertheless,* it is perceived, by us, today, as the mainspring of what is most traditional and conventional about "Irish" theatre as we have come to know it. But it was not always so. Brian Friel's carnivalesque *Dancing At Lughnasa* emerges out of a long, complex, highly developed Carnival tradition that might be described as uniquely "Irish". Indeed, he makes ironic reference to this carnivalesque view of Ireland and her people itself in his latest theatrical offering, *The London Vertigo,* which is based on Charles Macklin's 1761 play *The True Born Irishman* or, as the original author himself, renamed it,*The Irish Fine Lady.* The Irishman addresses the Englishman:

Hamilton — You seem to like Ireland, sir?

Mushroom — A damn fine country, Tom.
Upon the whole, take you all
together, you are a damned

honest tory rory rantum
scantum dancing, singing,
laughing, boozing, jolly,
friendly, fighting, hospitable
people. And I like you
mightily.

O'Doherty (to audience)

Nothing changes, does it ? [20]

END NOTES

[1] John Lahr", Theater" *Vogue Arts* (October, 1991) 174.

All subsequent references for this and other footnotes listed here appear in abbreviated form in the text.

[2] Robert Hogan, preface, *After the Irish Renaissance* (Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1967) v-vi.

The following description of the Irish Literary Renaissance is extracted from the above-mentioned work:

> Modern Irish writing before 1926 has been thoroughly documented by many people--by W. B. Yeats, George Moore, Lady Gregory, Lennox Robinson, Oliver Gogarty, and a host of scholars, critics, and biographers. Those early years, so aptly called the Irish Renaissance, saw a great flowering of literary activity. In 1898, Yeats, Moore, and Edward Martyn formed the Irish Literary Theatre which was in a few years to grow into the Abbey Theatre. In 1926, a group of patriotic ladies incited an Abbey audience to riot in protest against Sean O'Casey's play *The Plough and the Stars*, and very shortly afterwards the author left Ireland hardly ever to return. Between these two dates, the greatest poet, the greatest playwright, and the greatest novelist in the English-speaking world were all involved in the Irish Renaissance. Shaw the playwright did only touch the movement at longish intervals, and Joyce the novelist only stood half-sneering on its periphery, but Yeats the poet was in its very center. A Renaissance, however, is not one man, one Shakespeare, one towering mountain in the middle of a vast plain; and Yeats was surrounded by a host of men of genius and talent--by the prolific and fascinating George Moore, by the indomitable Lady Gregory, by the diffident genius John Synge and the even more diffident genius George Fitzmaurice, by

> those men of inimitable talent Padraic Colum, James Stephens, Seamus O'Kelly, Lenox Robinson, George Russell, T.C. Murray, Rutherford Mayne, St. John Ervine, and Lord Dunsany, by the masterly O'Casey, and by so many others that this preface would be inordinately longer if I merely listed them.

[3] Alexander Orloff, *Carnival. Myth and Cult* (Innsbruck: Perlinger Veriag, 1981).

I am indebted for my information here to the fuller, more comprehesive descriptions of various Carnival cults in the above-mentioned work.

[4] C. L. Barber, *Shakespeare's Festive Comedy. A Study of Dramatic Form And Its Relation to Social Custom* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959) 27-28.

[5] The following explanation of the terms *invocation* and *abuse* is excerpted from the above -mentioned work, 7.

> F. M. Cornford, in *The Origins of Attic Comedy,* suggested that invocation and abuse were the basic gestures of a nature worship behind Aristophanes'union of poetry and railing. The two gestures were still practised in the "folly" of Elizabethan Maygame, harvest-home, or winter revel: invocation, for example, in the manifold spring garlanding customs, "gathering for Robin Hood"; abuse, in the customary license to flout and fleer at what on other days commanded respect. The same double way of achieving release appears in Shakespeare's festive plays. There the poetry about the pleasures of nature and the naturalness of pleasure serves to evoke beneficent natural impulses; and much of the wit, mocking the good housewife Fortune from her wheel, acts to free the spirit as does the ritual abuse of hostile spirits. A saturnalian attitude, assumed by a clear-cut gesture toward liberty, brings mirth, an accession of wanton vitality. In the terms of Freud's analysis of wit, the energy normally

> occupied in maintaining inhibition is freed for celebration. The holidays in actual observance were built around the enjoyment of the vital pleasure of moments when nature and society are hospitable to life. In the summer, there was love in out-of door idleness; in the winter, within-door warmth and food and drink. But the celebrants also got something for nothing from festive liberty--the vitality normally locked up in awe and respect.

[6] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's* Poetics, trans. R. W. Rostel (USA: Ardis, 1973) 88.
Subsequent references in the text will identify the work as *Poetics*.

[7] Mikhail Bakhtin, introduction, *The Dialogic Imagination*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, ed.Michael Holquist (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1981) xix-xx.
The following definition of heteroglossia is excerpted from the above-mentioned work:

> Heteroglossia is Bakhtin's way of referring, in any utterance of any kind, to the peculiar interaction between the two fundamentals of communication. On the one hand, a mode of transcription must, in order to do its work of separating out texts, be a more or less fixed system. But these repeatable features, on the other hand, are in the power of the particular context in which the utterance is made; this context can refract, add to, or, in some cases, even subtract from the amount and kind of meaning the utterance may be said to have when it is conceived only as a systematic manifestation independent of context.
>
> This extraordinary sensitivity to the immense plurality of experience more than anything else distinguishes Bakhtin from other moderns who have been obsessed with language. I emphasize experience here because Bakhtin's basic scenario for modeling variety is two actual people talking to each other in a specific dialogue at a particular time and in a particular place.

[8] Michael Bristol, *Carnival And Theater. Plebeian Culture And The Structure of Authority in Renaissance England* (New York: Methuen, 1985) 22 - 23.

[9] The following explanation of the terms "crowning" and "uncrowning" are excerpted from *Doestoevski's Poetics* , 102-103.

> The primary carnival performance is the *mock crowning* and subsequent *discrowning of the king of carnival.* This ritual is found in one or another form in all festivals of the carnival type: in the most highly developed forms--the saturnalia, the European carnival, and the festival of fools (in which, in place of a king, mock priests, bishops, or popes were chosen, depending on the rank of the local church), and in less-developed forms--all of the other festivals of this type, even in the festive carouse, which included the selection of ephemeral kings and queens of the feast.
>
> The basis of the ritual performance of crowning and discrowning the king is the very core of the carnivalistic attitude to the world--*the pathos of vicissitudes and changes, of death and renewal.* Carnival is the festival of all-destroying and all-renewing time. The basic meaning of carnival can be expressed in this way. But we would emphasize again: this is not an abstract meaning, but rather a living attitude to the world, expressed in the experienced and play-acted concretely sensuous form of the ritual performance.
>
> Crowning and discrowning is a two-in one (*dvuedinyi*) ambivalent ritual expressing the inevitability, and simultaneously the creativity, of change and renewal, the jolly relativity of every system and order, every authority and every (hierarchical) position. The idea of immanent discrowning is contained already in the crowning: it is ambivalent from the very beginning . . . .
>
> The ritual of discrowning as it were finalizes the coronation, and is inseparable from it. (I repeat:

> this is a two-in-one ritual). And a new coronation shows through it. Carnival celebrates change itself, the very process of replacability (*smeniaemost*) rather than that which is replaced. Carnival is, so to speak, functional, not substantive. It absolutizes nothing; it proclaims the jolly relativity of everything. The ceremonial of the ritual of discrowning is counterposed to the ritual of coronation: the regal vestments are stripped from the discrownee, his crown is taken off, the remaining symbols of authority are removed, and he is ridiculed and beaten. All the symbolic elements of the ceremonial have a second, positive aspect-it is not naked, absolute negation and destruction (absolute negation, like absolute affirmation, is unknown to carnival). Moreover, it was precisely in the ritual of discrowning that the carnival pathos of change and renewal and the image of the creativity of death stood out expecially clearly. Therefore it is the ritual of discrowning that was most often transposed into literature. But, we repeat, crowning and discrowning are inseparable, they are two-in-one, and they transmute into one another; if they are absolutely divided, their carnivalistic significance is completely lost.

[10] Fintan O'Toole, "Mummer's the word", *The Irish Times* (Saturday, December 29, 1990) 5.

[11] Arthur Symons, "A Theory of the Stage", *The Theory of the Modern Stage* , ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Penguin, 1983) 342.
Subsequent references in the text will identify the article as "Theory".

[12] William Butler Yeats, " A People's Theatre", *The Theory of the Modern Stage,* ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Penguin, 1983) 335-337.

[13] Katharine Worth, *The Irish Drama of Europe from Yeats to Beckett* (London: Athlone Press, 1986) 224.

[14] D.E.S. Maxwell, introduction, *A Critical History of Modern Irish Drama* 1891-1980, (Cambridge: University Press , 1984) 4.

[15] Cathaerine Carswell and W. G. Fay, *The Fays of The Abbey Theatre; An Autobiographical Record* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1935) 106.

[16] Dawson Byrne, *The Story of Ireland's National Theatre: The Abbey Theatre, Dublin* (Dublin: The Talbott Press Limited, 1929) 38.

[17] Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography* (London: G.P. Putnams Sons, 1913) 9.

[18] Joseph Holloway, "Joseph Holloway Journal 1907", *Modern Irish Drama*, ed. John P. Harrington (New York and London: W.W. Norton & Co.,1991) 459.

[19] Mikhail Bakhtin, introduction, *Rabelais and His World*, ed. Helene Iswolsky (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1984) 7.

[20] Brian Friel, *The London Vertigo*, based on a play *The True Born Irishman* or *The Irish Fine Lady* by Charles Macklin (Oldcastle, Ireland: The Gallery Press, 1990) 24.

Chapter Two: The Context of Carnival Before *Dancing*.

> *Dancing at Lughnasa* provides a self-description: "dream music that is both heard and imagined; that seems to be both itself and its own echo" (DL70). It is a summary and at the same time a prediction; it sets in motion--especially in the pagan dance that provides the climax of the first act and in Fr. Jack's descriptions of the "Ryangans" (borrowed from Victor Turner's Ndembu)--energies that have never been previously quarried in his plays. [1]

The "energies" of *Dancing At Lughnasa* referred to in the above quotation may not be "quarrried" in Friel's previous plays but they are present in varying degrees throughout his work--both short stories and plays. The rites of Carnival, primarily dancing and music/singing, are the prime focus of this play's *dramaturgical* and *thematic* structure. These elements form a large part of the playwright's dramaturgy throughout the body of the playwright's previous work, and it may be their development and transformation over a long period of time in the service of other themes (exile, murder, language) which led the playwright to an explicit consideration of these forces in themselves in *Dancing*. With respect to the various elements that make up Carnival I have previously mentioned excessive eating, drinking, singing/music, dancing, sexual activity, reversal of status and gender, disguise--which include the use of masks and "dressing up", the giving of gifts, cursing and swearing, references to money and death, and activities that relate to and/or refer to the bodily functions of digestion, excretion and elimination. Carnivalized literature, as we have seen, refers to these elements as they appear in fictionalized form and also to a *multifaceted* verbal style. A text may be said to be "carnivalized" when poetry alternates with prose, different accents and/or languages are used in the same fiction, as well as the presence of oaths, puns, jokes, parody, verbal "thrashing", plays on words--in short a form of verbal "party" or celebration. Both the short stories and the plays of Brian Friel contain numerous instances of all the various elements mentioned above, some plays and stories, of course being notable examples of one particular element. *The Mundy Scheme*, written in 1969, is notable for its parodic treatment of death. *Crystal and The Fox* (1968)

is notable for the manner in which disguise is handled. One way of perceiving the showman, Fox, is as a performer who indulges in various roles, i.e., "masks", and the play might be perceived as the unravelling of mask after mask. Right up to the very end of the play we are never sure who the "real" Fox is.

I am dealing here with the *context of Carnival* as it develops and transforms in *specific* plays in a chronological sequence from 1964 to 1991. The continually evolving context of Carnival necessitates a continually evolving dramaturgy. Or it may be stated as the antithesis: that a continually developing and experimental dramaturgy encompasses a continually changing context. There are many, many examples of music/singing, dance, sexual activity, disguise, "carnivalized" text, etc., in most of the plays but it is not possible in a thesis of this size to trace the entire development of even one of these throughout the playwright's entire work. Also, particularly with reference to music/singing and dance, they can and do occur in many contexts, not necessarily that of Carnival. The plays I have selected to illustrate the continually changing (evolving) context of Carnival are *Philadelphia Here I Come*! (1964), *The Freedom of the City* (1973), *The Communication Cord* (1983) and *Fathers and Sons* (1987). The context of Carnival in each involves a different theme. The dramaturgy of each play is intrinsically related to that specific theme. In *Dancing* the dramaturgical *components* of Carnival concur with the *thematic* exploration of the rites that infuse the *non-literary* tradition of Carnival. *Dancing* has for its theme the exploration or investigation of celebration, ceremony, ritual. Consequently, it encompassses all the previous contexts of Carnival found in Friel's prior works and either expands and/or modifies their various dramaturgies. In extracting excerpts from these plays, I have made generous use of the playwright's stage directions and I offer the following citation from an article entitled "From Ballybeg to Broadway", an interview with the playwright by Mel Gussow in the New York Times Magazine, September, 1991 as proof of the importance the playwright places on his stage directions for a thorough comprehension of his plays:

> " I want a director to call rehearsals, to make sure the actors are there on time and to get them to

speak their lines clearly and distinctly," he says. "I've no interest whatever in his concept or interpretation. I think it's almost a bogus career. When did these people appear on the scene? One hundred years ago? " And he added, " I think we can dispose of them very easily again." By his measure a director should be "obedient" to the play. If not, all you need is an "efficient stage manager."

He makes his revisions before a play goes into rehearsal. "As far as I'm concerned there is a final and complete orchestra score. All I want is musicians to play it. I'm not going to rewrite the second movement for the sake of the oboe player." Then he admitted: "I sound very dogmatic and grossly self-assured about this, but I don't feel that way at all. I just think it's a more valuable stance than working on the hoof. For the actor the score is there and there are musical notations all around. We call them stage directions." [2]

Philadelphia Here I Come ! (1964) : The "Second Life".

In "Lughnasa," "Philadelphia"and other plays, the author stands within and outside the narrative, commenting sardonically on what in other hands might be regarded as nostalgia. Stylistically he moves away from naturalism, employing striking theatrical devices to shed more intense light on his subject. In "Lughnasa", the artist as a boy is played by an adult actor, who becomes a kind of overseer of the family history.

The plays take place at homecomings and leavings, reunions and preludes to exile. Old worlds dissolve and traditional values are questioned. Language is of the utmost concern--not simply the lyrical language that elevates his plays, but in his commentary on communities. He illustrates the power of things spoken and unspoken, language as both divider and bridge (*Gussow* 55).

I have elected to include excerpts here from *Philadephia!* because it is the first of Friel's plays to have garnered international notice, still probably his most celebrated play, and, in fact stylistically resembles *Dancing* , perhaps more than any of his plays since. *Philadelphia, Here I come !* marked Brian Friel's official debut into the world theatrical scene. Like *Dancing* it is set in the fictional village of Ballybeg. Like *Dancing* it is autobiographical in nature, and both plays employ the uses of a "fluid" stage and the technique of "flashback" to tell his story. The play centers on the themes of family, exile and community. The play contains many Carnival elements, but its most remarkable dramaturgical device, the creation of Public and Private Gar--the public and private self in continual dialogue with one another which requires the use of two actors--is also its most " carnivalesque" device in its very "double" vision". There are many other similar examples of "carnivalesque" discourse in his other plays--Joe and Mag in *Lovers* , the Keeney-Pyne exchanges in *Volunteers*---all replete with jokes, puns, "acting-out", mime ; and many in addition include song and dance. Both *Philadelphia!* and *Dancing* offer a similar vision of Carnival in that they juxtapose "official" duty-bound Ballybeg with "unofficial" Ballybeg--the life of color, sparkling conversation and celebration. *Philadelphia*! does not boast the communal revelries of the Mundy sisters, however, and in this play the liberating "unofficial" life is confined to Gar's imagination. Private Gar reflects the "second life" of Bakhtin, the character whose vocabulary may be considered to be the "other" vocabulary of clowning and devilment. He is the Carnival agent of temporal immunity from the constraints of repressive Ballybeg, the bringer of "holiday" into this unflinching "everyday" routine from which there is no escape:

> Private Gar is the one who has no place in Ballybeg: he is the Gar who is in exile. He also is the witty, outrageous, satirical, sensitive, fantasizing, distancing Gar. He is the essentially theatrical Gar, who acts out what his public brother has no audience for. He is the Gar who utters what Ballybeg unthinkingly, unfeelingly, unconsciously perhaps, consigns to silence. He is the Gar who compels Public Gar "in whispered shout" to say, "Screwballs, say something! say something, father!"

(83) though at the time both Gars are alone and desolate after Kate Doogan's farewell visit. [3]

The "carnivalesque" discourse of the two Gars (the play's protagonist and his alter-ego) , features Private Gar assuming many "roles" in the "skits" they initiate between them. The following exchanges between the two Gars take place the evening before Gar's departure for Philadelphia. Each exchange illustrates the "multiplicity of expression" associated with Carnival: a different role which necessitates a different vocabulary, a different accent, a different "disguise", a different "masking" (or version) of the unflinching tyranny of Gar's unremarkable, unvarying,routine of existance. Private Gar's roles range here from Patrick Palinakis, the president of the biggest chain of hotels in the world who is offering the promising young Gareth O'Donnell (Public Gar) a job and a great future, through the smooth, reverent tones of the radio announcer introducing the orchestra conducted by Gareth O'Donnell (again, Public Gar) who also plays a solo, to the cute little American chick who flirts with handsome Gareth (Public Gar) and promises better things to come. In the final "skit" Private Gar assumes the role of a fashion commentator who mocks the appearance of his father S.B. on his first entrance. In each of these fantasies Gar is either rich, famous, handsome, lucky, or extremely knowledgeable and he scores a victory over the mundane truths of his dreary, predictable, life:

(PUBLIC picks up a clean shirt, holds it to his chest, and surveys hinself in the small mirror above his wash-hand basin .)
Pretty smart, eh ?

PUBLIC: Pretty smart.

PRIVATE: Pretty sharp?

PUBLIC: Pretty sharp.

PRIVATE: Pretty oo-la-la?

PUBLIC: Mais oui.

PRIVATE: And not a bad looker, if I may say so.

PUBLIC: You may. You may.

PRIVATE: *(In heavy US accent)* I'm Patrick Palinakas, president of the biggest chain of biggest hotels in the world. We're glad to have you, Mr. O'Donnell.

PUBLIC: *(Sweet, demure)* And I'm glad to be here, Sir.

PRIVATE: Handsomely said, young man. I hope you'll be happy with us and work hard and one day maybe you'll be president of the biggest chain of biggest hotels in the world.

PUBLIC: That's my ambition, Sir.

PRIVATE: You are twenty-five years of age, Mr. O'Donnell?

PUBLIC: Correct.

PRIVATE: And you spent one year at University College Dublin?

PUBLIC: Yes, Sir.

PRIVATE: Would you care to tell me why you abandoned your academic career, Mr. O'Donnell?

PUBLIC: *(With disarming simplicity)* Well, just before I sat my First Arts exam, Sir, I did an old Irish turas, or pilgrimage, where I spent several nights in devout prayer, Sir.

PRIVATE: St. Patrick's Pilgrimage--on Lough--?

PUBLIC: St. Harold's Cross, Sir. And it was there that I came to realize that a life of scholarship was not for me. So I returned to my father's business.

PRIVATE: Yeah. You mentioned that your father was a businessman. What's his line ?

PUBLIC: Well, Sir, he has--what you would call--his finger in many pies--retail mostly--general dry goods--assorted patent drugs--hardware--ah--ah--dehydrated fish--men's king-size hose--snuffs from the exotic East... of Donegal--a confection for gourmets, known as Peggy's Leg--weedkiller--*(Suddenly breaking off: in his normal accent: rolling on the bed -)* Yahoooooo! It is now sixteen or seventeen years since I saw the Queen of France, then the Dauphiness, at Versailles--

PRIVATE: Let's git packin', boy. Let's git that li'l ole saddle bag opened and let's git packin'. But first let's have a li'l ole music on the li'l ole phonograph. Yeah man. You bet. Ah reckon. Yessir.

(PUBLIC puts a record on the player: First Movement, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto. PUBLIC is preening himself before his performance, and while he is flexing his fingers and adjusting his bow-tie, PRIVATE announces in the reverential tones of a radio announcer:)

The main item in tonight's concert is the First Movement of the Violin Concerto in E minor, Opus 64, by Jacob Ludwig Felix Mendelssohn. The orchestra is conducted by Gareth O'Donnell and the soloist is the Ballybeg half-back, Gareth O'Donnell. Music critics throughout the world claim that O'Donnell's simultaneous wielding of baton and bow is the greatest thing since Leather Ass died.

PRIVATE sits demurely on the chair. PUBLIC clears his throat. Now PUBLIC plays the violin, conducts, plays the violin, conducts, etc. etc. This keeps up for some time. . . [4]

.....

PUBLIC: (In absurd Hollywood style) Hi, gorgeous!. You live in my block?

PRIVATE: (Matching the accent) Yeah, big handsome boy. Sure do.

PUBLIC: Mind if I walk you past the incinerator, to the elevator?

PRIVATE: You're welcome, slick operator.
(PUBLIC is facing the door of his bedroom. Madge enters the kitchen from the scullery.)

PUBLIC: What'ya say, li'l chick, you and me--you know--I'll spell it out for ya if ya like.
(Winks, and clicks his tongue.)

PRIVATE: You say the cutest things, big handsome boy!

PUBLIC: A malted milk at the corner drug-store?

PRIVATE: Wow!

PUBLIC: A movie at the downtown drive-in?

PRIVATE: Wow-wow!

PUBLIC: Two hamburgers, two cokes, two slices of blueberry pie?

PRIVATE: Wow-wow-wow!

PUBLIC: And then afterwards in my apartment--
(*Philadephia!* 46)

. . . . . .

(S.B.enters from the shop and goes through his nightly routine. He hangs up the shop keys. He looks at his pocket watch and checks its time with the clock on the wall. He takes off his apron, folds it carefully and leaves it on the back of his chair. Then he sits down to eat. During all these ponderous jobs PRIVATE keeps up the following chatter:)

And here comes your pleasure, your little ray of sunshine. Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you--the one and only--the inimitable--the irrepressible--County Councillor--S.B.O'Donnell! *(Trumpet-hummed-fanfare. Continues in the smooth, unctuous tones of the commentator at a mannequin parade.)* And this time Marie Celeste is wearing a

> cheeky little head-dress by Pamela of Park Avenue, eminently suitable for cocktail parties, morning coffee, or just casual shopping. It is of brown Viennese felt, and contrasts boldly with the attractive beach ensemble, created by Simon. The pert little apron is detachable--(*S. B. removes apron*)--thank you, Marie Celeste--and underneath we have the tapered Italian--line slacks in ocelot. I would draw your attention to the large collar stud which is highly decorative and can be purchased separately at our boutique. We call this seductive outfit "Indiscretion". It can be worn six days a week, in or out of bed. (*In a polite tone*) Have a seat, Screwballs **(*Philadelphia!* 47-48).**

Ultimately, the "partying" discourse of the two Gars functions in opposition to the many "silences" of the play: the silences between Gar and his father, between Gar and Kate Doogan, between Gar and Kate's father, between Gar and his gang of Ballybeg friends who come to say good-bye but can't say good-bye. These "silences" are made all the more poignant because they are characterized by endlessly repetitive, meaningless chatter whose unconscious function is to actively circumvent any real communion between or among any of the characters. It (the by-play between two Gars) is a "ritual" designed for the purpose of combating all the other meaningless rituals of the life Gar wants passionately to abandon forever. It is a dramaturgical metaphor for the play's theme of exile: Private Gar is the Gar "in exile" who signifies the split consciousness of the community at large. The Carnival element of these passages which reflect the passion with which Gar desires to abandon this meaningless life does not ultimately offer either revelation or revolution but remains consigned to the "holiday" escape from the futility of "everyday". The last lines of the play reveal, finally, the impotence of these exchanges, in fact, the impotence of language or words at all in attempting to arrive at a resolution of Gar's dilemma. Carnivalized language, which throughout the play has acted as a deflector of alienation and as a portender of possibly better "community" to come, if only in fantasy, retreats into impoverished defeat:

> PRIVATE: . . . God, Boy, why do you have to leave?
> Why? Why?

PUBLIC: I don't know. I-I-I don't know.
(*Philadelphia !* 99)

The Freedom of the City (1973): **The "Uncrowning" and "Transformation Downward "of Authority.**

> In August 1969 when the British Home Secretary, James Callaghan, ordered the General-in-Command of the British Army in Northern Ireland to move in troops to Derry and Belfast to contain the situation, it became clear that a classical colonial crisis had arisen. It was little different from those of Cyprus, Algeria, Egypt, Malaysia or Portugese Mozambique, during the period when the decolonisation process had taken place, accompanied by the confrontation between the army of the colonial power and the guerilla forces of the colonised.
>
> Why we in this country should have been particularly aware of the nature of the crisis was because the first ever colonial withdrawal had taken place in southern Ireland in 1922, when the British forces withdrew from part of the island--after a war that was fought by the first urban guerilla force in history, backed up by flying columns. In Northern Ireland after 1969 the familiar trappings of the decolonisation process began to assert themselves: suspension of trial by jury, internment without trial, torture and even murder by the security forces. [5]

This play, unlike *Philadelphia* ! which features a central protagonist, centers rather on an ensemble of characters, and the playwright continues this "collectivist" vision right up to and including *Dancing*. It is overtly political in its thrust and deals with murder. The play is based loosely on the actual events of what subsequently came to be known as Bloody Sunday on January 30, 1972, when thirteen members of a civil-rights protest in Derry were shot and killed by the British Army. The play itself features three Catholic civil-rights marchers who, in attempting to escape the gas and water cannons when the march is dispersed by the British authorities, unwittingly find

themselves in the parlor of the Mayor of Derry, on the tenth of February, 1970. In these privileged surroundings they make free with music, drink, cigars, telephone calls and fancy bathrooms--while outside the "Guildhall" is surrounded with the army and police, who believe that that the building is inhabited by dangerous armed terrorists. The trio is ordered to dispense with their arms (they don't have any) and to exit the building, an order with which they comply, only, upon emerging, to be shot down in cold blood. The action in the Guildhall takes place in the past tense, and the subsequent murder is commented upon, discussed/reported/evaluated in the present by different groups of people--British, Irish and American who attempt to arrive at the truth of the situation--the tribunal, the army, the press, and the parish priest, and the sociologist. The play, then, is a past/present juxtaposition of these two levels, at the same time making us fully aware of a third, unseen, cast of characters who people the city and who are the backdrop for the action of the play, the victims of numerous social injustices which have occasioned the civil rights march in the first place. We do not *see* the city on this level, but we *hear* it through the use of off-stage voices and sounds and in the numerous references by on-stage characters to the lives that are lived "out there". This third unseen level is as crucial to a comprehension of the play as the more obvious first two and in terms of production/performance must be as fully realized as the other two--a special feature and challenge of this play. I have chosen to call these three levels for the purpose of this thesis, **The Party** , **The Voices of Authority** and **Derry City** . The"carnivalized" text in this play involves a more complex and multifaceted dramaturgy then that of *Philadelphia Here I Come*! whose most notable feature with respect to Carnival as previously noted was the dramaturgical device of the two Gars and their "carnivalesque" discourse. This play provides a decisive dramaturgical departure from the playwright's plays up to this point on several levels. It features, in a sense, three plays within one play, providing us with a multifaceted text in that each is differently constructed, employing its own cast, its own style of vocabulary and writing, and all forming one part of the whole, simultaneous to the other "plays" but not interacting with them. Hence the implications for performance stylistically are different on each level, thus invoking a "polytheatricality" which comes directly out of this multifarious, "Carnivalized" dramaturgy. The actual term

"polytheatricality" does not derive from Bakhtin but rather from the critic Jan Kott, who in *The Bottom Translation* speaks of Bakhtin and Carnival:

> Bakhtin has often written about the dialogic nature of thought and truth, which appeared most fully in the literature which stemmed from the Saturnalia and the carnival tradition. The linguistic expression of this dialogue is polyphony, Bakhtin's *heteroglossia*--meetings and matings at the marketplace, where idiolects and idioms, slangs and dialects, the most various social tongues, each bring a different experience, different beliefs and customs, different vision and understanding .
>
> "Dialogue" and "dialogization" are the basic principles, indeed the essence, of a novel. But not of drama. For Bakhtin, a dramatic dialogue does not have the "carnival polyphony", the multiple voices, the encounter between various experiences in "their own" separate tongues. But polyphony, the meeting of various experiences, of various "ways of speaking", may appear not in the dialogue of characters but in the "dialogue" of various "theaters", of various theatrical forms in one play. "Polyphony" is then "polytheatricality", polymorphics are stage polygraphics. [6]

1. <u>The Party</u> :

> (*...The dressing-room door is flung open. SKINNER is dressed in splendid mayoral robe and chain and wears an enormous ceremonial hat jauntily on his head. At the door:*)"
> SKINNER: 'You're much deceived; in nothing am I changed/But in my garments! "
>
> (*He comes into the parlour carrying robes and head-gear for the other two. LILY gives one of her whoops*)
>
> LILY: O Jesus Mary and Joseph!
>
> SKINNER: "Through tattered clothes small vices do appear; Robes and furred gowns hide all. "

LILY: Mother of God, would you look at him! And the hat! What's the rig, Skinner?

(SKINNER *distributes the gowns.*)

SKINNER: Mayor's robes, alderman's robes, councillor's robes. Put them on and I'll give you both the freedom of the city.

LILY: Skinner, you're an eejit!

SKINNER: The ceremony begins in five minutes. The world's press and television are already gathering outside. "Social upheaval in Derry. Three gutties become freemen." Apologies, Mr.Hegarty! "Two gutties." What happened to the Orphans' Orchestra?

(*He switches on the radio. A military band. They have to shout to be heard above it . . .*)

MICHAEL: Catch yourself on, Skinner.

LILY: Lord, the weight of them! (*To* MICHAEL) Put it on for the laugh, young fella.

SKINNER: Don the robes, ladies and gentlemen, and taste real power.

(LILY *puts on her robe and head-dress.* MICHAEL *reluctantly puts on the robe only.* SKINNER *has the* Union Jack *in one hand and the ceremonial sword in the other.*)

LILY: Lookat-lookat-lookat me, would you! (*She dances around the parlour* .) Di-do-do-da-di-doo-da-da.
(Sings) "She is the Lily of Laguna; she is my Lily and my--".Mother of God, if the wanes could see me now!

SKINNER: Or the chairman.

LILY: Ooooops!

SKINNER: Lily, this day I confer on you the freedom of the City of Derry. God bless you, my child. And now, Mr. Hegarty, I think we'll make you a life peer. Arise Lord Michael--of Gas.

LILY: They make you feel great all the same. You feel you could--you could give benediction! [7]

This level of the play deals with the activities of three people--Lily, a housewife, Skinner, a radical and Michael, a "moderate" civil-rights activist--during their "confinement" on this February day in the parlor of the Mayor's residence known as the Guildhall. It is the level of the play most concerned with action and solely concerned with entertainment. It is the only level of the play which has elements of dance, music, singing, poetry, jokes, puns and "masquerade" and the one where we most come to "know" the characters concerned. It is the most "affective" level of the play and the level designed by the playwright to appeal to the audience in a visceral manner. This level is the only level (in contrast to the other two) which requires both a setting and properties; and, indeed , according to the stage directions of the play, an elaborate, authentic "Mayor's Parlor" is needed in production as the backdrop for the "carnivalesque" activities in which the three characters engage. The *style* of this level is completely different from **The Voices of Authority** and from **Derry City**. The following list indicates the extent to which the setting and properties (in Bakhtin's terms, that which is "bodily" and "material") figure on this level of the play. It is important to note this physicalization in juxtaposition to **The Voices of Authority** which features no setting and no properties, and to **Derry City**, which is heard but never seen. Indeed the "carnivalesque" activities of the trio require extensive use of both setting and properties to accomplish their "transformation downward"--on a bodily, material, level with the implication, of course, that these "basic" comforts become the tools of empowerment for a definite "transformation upward", as it were, to a better life. Skinner functions as a King of Misrule, actually "crowning" himself with the robes and ceremonial hat and in doing so simultaneously "uncrowns" the importance and significance of several "official" offices and functions throughout the course of the entire play. The grandeur and extravagance of the set ("Real oak. And brass. The very best of

stuff." . . ."Pure Silver. "Real Leather.") (***Freedom*119-120**) function in opposition to the poverty of these three characters, and it is the principal Carnival agent of their (temporary) liberation. It is symbolic of the world they aspire to but are not part of. It is a *visual* representation of the oppression under which they live and a *visual* representation of the freedom they so desperately want, and Friel describes it explicitly and in great detail in the stage directions. The following is a selective sampling of how the setting and properties contribute to the trio's temporary exaltation in their function as agents of Carnival:

a) Lily, Michael and Skinner help themselves to the *liquor*.
b) Lily and Skinner use the *phone* to call Skinner's bookie and Lily's husband's cousin, Betty Breen.
c) Lily and Skinner play the *radio*.
d) Lily, Michael and Skinner don the *robes* and *headgear* (Michael only the *robes*). Lily and Skinner "play-act" at being the Lord and Lady Mayor of Colmncille, affecting grand accents, pretending to greet children, etc. Lily dances and sings "The Lily of Laguna" and she and Skinner both sing and dance to "The Man who broke the bank at Monte Carlo".
e) Lily and Skinner "play-act" to *Sir Joshua's portrait*, pretending they are appealing Lily's case (her unacceptable domestic condition) to him.
f) Skinner stubs out his *cigar* on the *leather-top desk* .
g) Skinner, using the *ceremonial sword*, pretends to fence with the British army.
h) Skinner pulls out a pile of papers from the *desk* and scatters them around the table. He "play-acts" a "meeting of the corporation", burlesques the many important matters which have to be attended to in the course of daily life in the Mayor's office: Money for the Society of Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, answering invitations issued by the Amateur Opera Society, etc.
i) Skinner dons the *ceremonial hat* and announces he is leaving the building with it on his head. He does a little dance and sings "Where did you get that hat ?" as he tells us this.
j) Skinner sticks the *ceremonial sword* into *Sir Joshua's portrait*.
k) Lily and Skinner sign the *Distinguished Visitors' Book*.

> The laws, prohibitions, and restrictions which determine the system and order of normal, non-carnival life are for the period of carnival suspended; above all the hierarchical system and all the connected forms of fear, awe, piety, etiquette are suspended. All *distance* between people is suspended and a special carnival category goes into effect--*the free, familiar contact among people.* New modes of interrelationship of man with man which is counterposed to the hierarchical social relationships of non-carnivalistic life. . . . Eccentricity, a special feature of this new contact, permits the latent sides of human nature to be revealed and developed in a concretely sensuous form . . . . Man's behaviour, gesture and word are liberated from the authority of all hierarchical positions (estate rank, age and property status.)
> **(Bakhtin, *Poetics* 101)**

Despite the Carnival context of revolution in **The Party** passages, we watch the trio walk to their terrible deaths with their hands above their heads at the end of the play. The Carnival passages serve to exacerbate the bloody reality of their final end for the audience, who is made privy to this end right from the beginning of the play. The irony of these Carnival activities is therefore greatly intensified for the audience Lily, Michael and Skinner are the Carnival agents of *possible* change, of *possible* liberty. Their Carnival antics and laughter represent a refusal to concur with, to submit to, the legitimized violence of those in authority. Theirs is a definitive gesture towards liberty, an act of insurrection against that which is official, legal and ultimately, violent. They point the way on a material, bodily level. The drink, clothes, privileges, that they "usurp" are concrete embodiments of empowerment, enfranchisement and transformation--of freedom. The theme of the play is revolution but the manner in which Carnival is used here might be termed actively anti-revolutionary if the notions of gesture and possibility are disregarded.

2. **The Voices of Authority :**

> It will also be quite normal to hear certain natives declare: "I speak as Senegalese and as a Frenchman. I speak as an Algerian as well as a Frenchman...." The intellectual who is Arab and French, or Nigerian and English, when he comes up against the need to take on two nationalities, chooses, if he wants to remain true to himself, the negation of one of determinations. But most often, since they cannot or will not make a choice, such intellectuals gather together all the historical determining factors which have conditioned them and take up a fundamentally "universal standpoint."
> **(*O'Connor* 23 qtd.)**

a) The British cast: (The Tribunal--the Judge, Police Constable, Dr. Winbourne, forensic expert, Professor Cuppeley, pathologist,) the Army (Brigadier Johnson Hansbury--Army Press Officer, Three Soldiers). All seek to defend the position taken by the army--namely, that they opened fire on three people whom they considered to be terrorists and whom they believed to be armed:

> JUDGE: The weight of evidence presented over the past few days seems to be directing the current of this inquiry into two distinct areas. The first has to do with what at first sight might appear to be mere speculation, but it could be a very important element, I suggest, in any understanding of the entire canvas of that Saturday--and I refer to the purpose the three had in using the Guildhall, the municipal nerve-centre of Londonderry, as their platform of defiance. And the second area--more sensible to corroboration or rebuttal, one would think--concerns the arms the deceased were alleged to have used against the army. And I suggest, also, that these two areas could well be different aspects of the same question. Why the Guildhall? Counsel

> for the deceased pleads persuasively that in the melee following the public meeting the three in their terror sought the nearest possible cover and that cover happened to be the Guildhall--a fortuitous choice. This may be. But I find it difficult to accept that of all the buildings adjacent to them they happened to choose the one building which symbolized for them a system of government they opposed and were in fact at that time illegally demonstrating against. And if the choice was fortuitous, why was the building defaced? Why were its furnishings despoiled? Why were its records defiled? Would they have defaced a private house in the same way? I think the answers to these questions point to one conclusion: that the deceased deliberately chose this building; that their purpose and intent was precise and deliberate. In other words, that their action was a carefully contrived act of defiance against and an incitement to others to defy, the legitimate forces of law and order. No other conclusion is consistent with the facts.
> **(*Freedom* 148-149)**

b) The Irish cast: The priest, the press (Liam O'Kelly, RTE Commentator and the press photographer) , balladeer, children and accordionist who seek to eulogize the three dead persons as heroes who died for their country:

> PRIEST: At eleven o'clock tomorrow morning solemn requiem Mass will be celebrated in this church for the repose of the souls of the three people whose death has plunged this parish into a deep and numbing grief. As you are probably aware, I had the privilege of administering the last rites to them and the knowledge that they didn't go unfortified before their Maker is a consolation to all of us. But it is natural that we should mourn. Blessed are they that mourn, says our Divine lord. But it is also right and fitting that this tragic happening should make us sit back and take stock and ask ourselves the very pertinent question: why did they die?

> I believe the answer to that question is this. They died for their beliefs. They died for their fellow citizens. They died because they could endure no longer the injuries and injustices and indignities that have been their lot for too many years. They sacrificed their lives so that you and I and thousands like us might be rid of that iniquitous yoke and might inherit a decent way of life. And if that is not heroic virtue, then the word sanctity has no meaning.
>
> No sacrifice is ever in vain. But its value can be diminished if it doesn't fire our imagination, stiffen our resolution, and make us even more determined to see that the dream they dreamed is realized. May we be worthy of that dream, of their trust. May we have the courage to implement their noble hopes. May we have God's strength to carry on where they left off.
>
> In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
> **(*Freedom* 124)**

c) The American cast (the sociologist Dr. Philip Dodds) provides the neutral viewpoint of the outsider--the dispassionate inquiry into the consideration of poverty, its causes, the possible remedies for it.

> DODDS: People with a culture of poverty are provincial and locally orientated and have very little sense of history. They know only their own troubles, their own neighbourhood, their own local conditions, their own way of life; but they don't have the knowledge or the vision or the ideology to see that their problems are also the problems of the poor in the ghettos of New York and London and Paris and Dublin--in fact all over the Western world. To give you some examples: they share a critical attitude to many of the values and institutions of the dominant class; they share a suspicion of government, a detestation of the police, and very often a cynicism to the church. But the very moment they acquire an objective view of their condition, once they become aware that their

> condition has counterparts elsewhere, from that moment they have broken out of their subculture, even though they may still be desperately poor. And any movement-- trade union, religious, civil rights, pacifist, revolutionary-- any movement which gives them this objectivity, organizes them, gives them real hope, promotes solidarity, such a movement inevitably smashes the rigid caste that encases their minds and bodies.
> **(*Freedom* 111)**

This level of the play deals with the commentators on the action of **The Party**. In contrast to **The Party**, it is highly narrative, descriptive and presentational in style, consisting mostly of a series of monologues (thirteen) with little or no interaction among the characters, and does not require any set at all. Location could be indicated through lighting. Props would be minimal. Stylistically, it becomes a separate play in and of itself. It deals much less with action than does **The Party**. It is the part of the play most intended to engage us intellectually (rather than affectively) as we are presented with several varying points of view about the shootings, and who, if anyone is to blame. There is no central character on this level, and while it makes a strong political statement on the disintegration of a society which has synonymous meanings for authority and violence, the playwright's voice is not heard distinctly through one character. The audience is here asked to "detach" themselves from Lily, Michael and Skinner. There are three basic attitudes to the multiple deaths on this level and they can be divided according to the nationality of the characters involved: British, Irish and American. There are two ways of looking at this level in the context of Carnival. It is emphatically not "carnivalesque" in that it does not deal with the singing, dancing, drinking activities of **The Party**. It does, however, contribute to the "carnivalesque" multifaceted whole of the entire play, by functioning in *stylistic opposition* to **The Party**. **The Party** might be said to represent unofficial discourse and **The Voices of Authority** official discourse. But, in and of *itself* this level of the play may be considered "carnivalesque" in *form*, if not in content. The multifarious cast of different nationalities and different points of view make up the essence of the dialogue which is instrinsic to the idea of Carnival. I do not believe that the playwright is

offering any of these explanations as the "right" one but is rather criticizing all these attempts as being totally inadequate to the situation:

> Heteroglossia, once incorporated into the novel (whatever the forms for its incorporation) is *another's* speech in *another's* language, serving to express authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of double-voiced discourse. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are *two* voices, *two* meanings and *two* expressions.
> **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 428)**

3. Derry City : (The "unseen" level of the play)

> In this sense, there are always *two* plays going on, not just the whole range of possible worlds which *might* be, of which the spectacle before us is one, but the play offstage, relating to the play in progress, its alter ego **(*Pine* 142).**

VOICE 1: There's at least a dozen dead.

VOICE 2: Where?

VOICE 1: Inside the Guildhall.

VOICE 3: I heard fifteen or sixteen.

VOICE 1: Maybe twenty.

VOICE 3: And a baby in a pram.

VOICE 1: And an old man. They blew his head off.

VOICE 2: O my God.

VOICE 3: They just broke the windows and lobbed in hand grenades.

VOICE 2: O my God.

VOICE 1: Blew most of them to smithereens.

VOICE 2: Fuck them anyway! Fuck them! Fuck them!
(*Freedom* 125)

This third "play" within the play consists of the off-stage voices, off-stage sound effects and off-stage characters who are referred to throughout the action of *The Freedom of the City* but who never actually appear. These "off-stage characters" appear throughout the short stories and the dramaturgy of Brian Friel right up to and including *Dancing*, which possesses a considerable number. Indeed, the feast of Lughnasa for which the play is named is celebrated *on-stage* in the play itself by the Mundy sisters but it also has its *off-stage* celebrations: the Harvest dance, for instance, which is copiously alluded to in the play and the off-stage participants in this and other off-stage harvest celebrations. These characters are frequently characterized by "carnivalesque" names and alluded to in terms of many different Carnival activities: eating, drinking, sex, death, etc. The off-stage characters referred to here by Lily throughout this play are significant in number and are a powerful source of information for the audience about the kind of occupants the city possesses. This level is the third dramaturgical variant in the "carnivalized" whole. In a sense, Lily, Michael and Skinner are signifiers of this whole, the representatives or emissaries from Bakhtin's "Carnival square".[8] The amount of information relating to Carnival features such as eating, drinking, sex, money, death, disguise, music, dance, etc. about these characters whom we hear about but never see is not insignificant. The list which follows is selective. I have only included off-stage characters who are referred to by name. More important than any individual Carnival activity in

this compilation is not necessarily the significance of a particular Carnival activity attached to a specific person but rather the diversity in unity which is the hallmark of Carnival and which becomes evident here as we compare one character to the other. It is apparent from the description of the characters included here that they would belong to Bakhtin's "unofficial" rather than "official" society:

1. *Johnny Duffy,* the window cleaner.

> . . . you know--the window cleaner--Johnny the Tumbler- --and I'm telling him what the speakers is saying 'cos he hears hardly anything now since he fell off the ladder the last time. And I'm just after telling him "the streets is ours and nobody's going to move us" when I turn round and Jesus, Mary and Joseph there's this big Saracen right behind me. Of course I took to my heels. And when I look back there's Johnny the Tumbler standing there with his fist in the air and him shouting, "The streets is ours and nobody's going to move us". And you could hardly see him below the Saracen. Lord, the chairman'll enjoy that (***Freedom*** **114).**

2. *The Chairman*

Lily's husband whose lungs were destroyed by fumes and who doesn't work but spends the day sitting by the fire reading children's comic books. He can't bear to look at Declan and he blames his (Declan's) infirmity on Lily.

3. *Celia Cunningham*

Lily's neighbor "across from us" who when she drinks laments the sweepstake ticket she bought and lost when she was fifteen.

4. *Colm Damien*

Celia Cunningham's seven-year-old son, whom she takes to all the civil rights marches because she believes the CS gas might be a cure for his stuttering.

5. *Minnie McLaughlin*

Lily's neighbour on the floor above her, who wears a miraculous medal pinned on her vest every time she goes on a civil rights march. Last Wednesday she got hit on the leg with a rubber bullet and now she pretends she has a limp and the young men of the neighbourhood call her Che Guevara.

5. *The Mad Mulligans*

The children Lily used to be locked up with in the cloakroom when the inspector came to visit the school because they wern't smart enough to make a good impression.

6. *Declan*

Lily's nine-year-old son, who is not as forward as the others, not much for mixing, "the pet". Lily won a five-pound note in a Slate Club raffle and took him on a bus run to Bundoran because he doesn't play about on the street with the others. We learn that Declan is a "mongel" child and that he is the reason why Lilly marches.

7. *Jasmine*

The baby Lily never had, but if she'd been born she'd have called her this name because it reminds her of a gorgeous yellow flower she once saw in a funeral wreath.

8. *Andy Boyle's Wife* .

She is dead. Lily attended her funeral and that is where she saw jasmine flowers for the first time.

9. *Kevin*

Lily's son who eats like a bishop and has nothing to show for it.

10. *Noelle*

Lily's fourteen-year-old daughter, who was born on a roasting bank holiday in August but she called her Noelle all the same.

11. *Tom*

Lily's fifteen-year-old son, who has insulted the Chairman's cousin by dubbing the movie she has let him and the other children into for free as "stupid". We learn that last summer Tom stuck an old saucepan on his head to give everyone a laugh and his head swelled up with the heat and he was stuck with the saucepan for two days and two nights.

12. *Paddy Skinner*

A neighbour of Lily's who used to keep goats behind the mormon chapel.

13. *The Granny*

The Chairman's seventy-seven-year-old mother, who is as supple as an old owl with her own teeth and eyes. She lives alone and still cleans twenty houses a week for dentists, solicitors and doctors. She is referred to as Aunt Dodie by her clients, who think of her as an" old pet", and she keeps a timetable on her kitchen wall for Lily and her family so that they all get a chance at a bath once a week.

14. *The Wee Mulherns*

Some orphaned, very musically talented children who live near Lily, whose mother and father died of TB.

15. *Dickie Devine*

A neighbour of Lily's, who plays the trombone and beats his wife.

16. *Annie*

Dickie Devine's wife, who pawned the trombone last Wednesday so that the children would have enough money for bus fare.

17. *Andy Boyle*

The widower whose dead wife was mentioned previously. A neighbour of Lily's who stays in bed because he has no coat.

18. *Beejaw Betty a.k.a. Betty Breen*

The Chairman's cousin, who works at the cash desk of the Bijou Cinema, who used to let Lily's children into the cinema for free on Saturday afternoons but no longer does because one of them once informed her that the picture was stupid. Lily calls her on the phone and tells her she is in the Mayor's parlor. Lily says she saw her last week at the Granny's. Perhaps she is on the "bath" timetable also ?

19. *Boxer Brannigan*

A boxer or fighter in Lily's neighbourhood who tried to steal a petrol lorry and when accosted by the police said he was only looking for a refill for his lighter.

If we compare this play to *Philadelphia Here I Come!* we have here a "carnivalesque" dramaturgy which is greatly expanded and more highly complex from that of its precedent. We are presented here with a play which is triply layered. We have **The Party** featuring Carnivalesque activities which include music/singing, dancing, "dressing up", quoting poetry, drinking, playing at "skits". We have **The Voices of Authority** functioning in carnivalesque opposition to **The Party** in its monologistic straightforwardness but in itself presenting the audience with the "double" viewpoint of its speakers and the playwright, and finally, **Derry City** where we are continually made aware of the larger Carnival context which the play signifies. Like **The Party** it refuses to collude with the tyrannous"truth" of **The Voices of Authority**. There is hope for **Derry City**, though, if not for **The Party**. Lily, Michael and Skinner are murdered. But if the residents of occupied Derry persist , despite their poverty, their helplessness, their disenfranchisement, to drink, to sing, to play the trombone, and maybe another time, to march, *perhaps* there is a chance that **The Voices of Authority** will finally be silenced. These characters represent the *possible* but not *probable* future. If we consider the terrible truth about the unempowered lives of these people and know beforehand their tragic fate, the carnivalesque activities of **The Party** (Michael, Lily, Skinner) are ironic and cruel. The *suggestion* of empowerment and enfranchisement is present in the carnivalesque activities of the inhabitants of **Derry City** and acknowledged simultaneously with the probability, though not the certainty, of death.

The Communication Cord: (1983) : Language, Gesture and the Irish Heritage in Parodic Travesty.

> It is our conviction that there never was a single strictly straightforward genre, no single type of discourse--artistic, rhetorical, philosophical, religious, ordinary everyday--that did not have its own parodying and travestying double, its own comic-ironic *contre-partie* What is more, these parodic doubles and laughing reflections of the direct word were, in some cases, just as sanctioned by tradition and just as canonized as their elevated models **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 53).**

In contrast to *Philadelphia Here I Come* ! and *The Freedom of the City* , whose themes provide a context for Carnival as the "second life" or "uncrowning" and "transformation downward," *The Communication Cord* provides the context of *parody,* for its theme is language itself. (This parody, as we shall see, will include elements of "uncrowning" and of "transformation downward" as well.) The play is a parody of *language* and, ultimately, of a certain reverential manner (intrinsically bound up with language) of looking at the Irish heritage. Richard Pine, in his recent study *Brian Friel And Ireland's Drama* , describes the play as a" dance in talk" and cites as the play's source a work by Irving Goffman called *Forms of Talk* **(*Pine* 5)**. "Whereas in *Translations,* words control the experience of life, in *The Communication Cord* 'life' controls words"**(*Pine* 179)**. George O'Brien, in *Brian Friel* , says: "But the pieties honored in *Translations* are satirized in *The Communication Cord,* where responsibility for linguistic duplicity and cultural misprision is located within individuals rather than in social, political , or historical agencies" **(*O'Brien* 97)**.

> From the outset, then, and throughout the play, language is seen as a means of talking oneself into or out of a given situation. It is understood by the characters to lend credibility and definition to whatever transaction they have in mind. Like the cottage, language is a matter of pastiche, rather than a matter of authenticity. As the play develops,

> however, it becomes clear that material phenomena, not to mention other people, resist the arbitrary control language presumes to impose on them. Thus, not only does the cottage fire afflict Tim with clouds of befogging smoke, but the cottage itself turns out to be already occupied by his colleague and former girlfriend, Claire Harkin. Local residents participate in the proliferating chaos that breaks loose when what Tim describes--speaking academically, but unwittingly previewing the course of the play's events--no longer holds good: "All social behaviour, the entire social order, depends on our communicational structures, on words mutually agreed on and mutually understood"**(18)**.
>
> Appropriately, not even the play's title may be taken literally. Communication as a cord out of which "the net"(19) of inference, implication and mutuality may be woven--a whole fabric of social interaction, linguistically conceived--is one of the play's particularly potent conceits, all the more incisive in view of the plot's basic orientation around the matter of mutually significant and mutually advantageous personal relationships. But the communication cord is also a mechanism used when a bus or train is out of control or when there is an emergency on board; and certainly the play's farcical alarums and diversions give substance to this other--more familiar, less inventive--meaning of the title. The characters in the play who take their language literally, and who tend to overlook the contributions made to discourse by the nuance of context and the quirk of personality, are those who practice a preemptive rather than an interactive way with the world, with unfortunate consequences for themselves **(*O'Brien* 108-109).**

Being a farce, the play is replete with a whole roster of Carnival "disguises" and "masks" (with respect to the various characters and their relationships to one another) which unravel throughout the course of the action. The actual setting of the play is the most obvious "disguise" and literally does unravel, fall apart, at the end. The carnivalesque quality of the whole is encapsulated at the very beginning of Act I in Friel's explicit

description of the Irish cottage which comprises the setting and which , in its lack of authenticity, its "mask" of reality, functions as a visual metaphor for the various "masks" which language, and hence communication, take on throughout the play. Ultimately, we come to a realization of the inadequacy of both. The following excerpt is what follows his exhaustive description of the cottage:

> *Every detail of the kitchen and its furnishings is accurate for its time (from 1900 to 1930). But one quickly senses something false about the place. It is too pat, too "authentic" It is in fact a restored house, a reproduction, an artefact of today making obeisance to a home of yesterday.* [9]

Like the setting in *The Freedom of the City,* the cottage functions in this play as an active agent of Carnival whose function is to turn the world of the play upside down. Indeed it becomes physically "alive " with doors blowing open and closed, lights going on and off , fires smoking and refusing to smoke throughout the action of the play. We are continually reminded of the central place it occupys as an icon of the Irish tradition which it signifies and which it ultimately travesties. The cottage is a "lie" as much as Tim's "lie" that he is preparing to tell Susan's father. He has cooked up a scheme with Jack (who actually owns the house) to "pretend" to Susan, his intended, and her father, Dr. Donovan, a politician as well as a doctor, when they arrive for a short visit, that he is the owner of this "authentic" piece of traditional Irish heritage. His intention is to impress Susan's father with a background superior to the one he actually possesses and to deflect her father's attention from the fact that he (Tim) is still an untenured lecturer at the university. The subject of his thesis, entitled "Discourse Analysis with Particular Reference to Response Cries", he describes as "talk, conversation, chat" (***Cord*** **18**). Dr. Donovan, later in the play, unknowingly allows himself to be drawn into the ruse and offers his version of the cottage's "truth" after examining it for the first time. The following passage illustrates equally the "travesty" inherent in the inauthetic, charming Irish discourse describing the inauthentic, but charming cottage which travesties Irish tradition:

TIM: It's nice, isn't it?

DONOVAN: What?

TIM: The place.

DONOVAN: Nice? It's magnificent, Tim. Really magnificent. This is what I need--this silence, this peace, the restorative power of that landscape.

TIM: Yes.

(*Another pause.* DONOVAN *is standing in the middle of the kitchen, poised, listening, absolutely still, only his eyes moving.*)

It's very nice indeed.

DONOVAN: This speaks to me, Tim. This whispers to me. Does that make sense to you?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: And despite the market-place, all the years of trafficking in politics and medicine, a small voice within me still knows the responses. I was born in a place like this. Did you know that? No, how could you. In County Down. A long, long, time ago, Tim. Politics has its place--of course it has. And medicine, too, has its place--God knows it has. But this Tim, this transcends all those ...hucksterings. This is the touchstone. That landscape, that sea, this house--this is the apotheosis. Do you know what I'm saying?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: I suppose all I'm really saying is that for me this is the absolute verity. Am I talking nonsense?

TIM: No.

DONOVAN: I envy you, Tim. You know that, don't you?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: That's not true. I don't envy you. You know that, don't you?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: I'm happy for you. I rejoice for you because I think you hear that small voice, too, and I think you know the responses. Thank God for this, Tim. (*He shakes himself as if he were freeing himself of a painful - pleasurable memory.*) Well! Aren't you going to show me around? What was it Susie told me?--that this was just four walls when you got it? I don't believe it! Is that true?

TIM: That's all. Only four.

DONOVAN: And you re-roofed it yourself?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: And thatched it?

TIM: Yes.

DONOVAN: By yourself?

TIM: Yes

DONOVAN: GOOD L--. Good man. What did you thatch it with ?

TIM: Thatch.

DONOVAN: Straw or bent?

TIM: Straw.

DONOVAN: It's warmer than bent but not as enduring. Do you find that?

TIM: It's not as enduring but it's warmer.

DONOVAN: Right. What sort of scollops?

TIM: Oh, the usual.

DONOVAN: Hazel or sally?

TIM: Hazel.

DONOVAN: Not as resilient but they last longer. Is that your experience?

TIM: They last longer but they're not as resilient.

DONOVAN: Exactly. "The windy day isn't the day to scollop your thatch." Isn't that it? And this is your bedroom?
(TIM *catches his elbow to stop him going into the bedroom.*)

TIM: We'll look at this room first. That's just a bedroom in there.

DONOVAN: The "room down".

TIM: The "room down"--that's it. One double bed. (*Then rapidly*) Fireplace. Usual accoutrements. Tongs. Crook. Pot--iron. Kettle--black. Hob. Recess for clay pipes. Stool. Settle bed. Curtains for same. Table. Chairs. Christ!
(*This expletive because he sees Claire coming serenely down the stairs.*)

DONOVAN: (*Delighted*) And you've held on to the old posts and chains!

(*Tim signals frantically to* CLAIRE *to go back up. She sees his gestures but keeps coming down.* DONOVAN *is crouching down at the posts.*)

My God, Tim, that's wonderful, that's really wonderful! I haven't seen these for--my God,

it must be over fifty years! And you've incorporated them into the kitchen as of course it should be because that is exactly as it was! Oh, you're no amateur at this, Tim! You know your heritage! Oh, you and I are going to have a lot to say to each other! Marvellous! Just marvellous!

(CLAIRE *is now at the bottom of the stairs and is approaching them. As she approaches, Tim's panic rises. He scarcely knows what he is saying.*)

TIM: This is where we all come from.

DONOVAN: Indeed.

TIM: This is our first cathedral.

DONOVAN: Amen to that.

TIM: This shaped all our souls. This determined our first pieties. This is a friend of mine.

(DONOVAN, *who has begun to look quizzically at* TIM--"*Surely the young man isn't mocking me ?*"--*now turns.* CLAIRE, *silent and smiling, is right behind him. He gets quickly to his feet.*)
(*Cord* 30-33)

The characters, like many of the "off-stage" characters of *The Freedom of the City*, possess "carnivalesque" names: Nora the Scrambler (who doesn't "scramble"), Jack the Cod (who doesn't fish), and Barney the Banks (so-called because he camps out in a caravan). Dr. Donovan is referred to as Dr. Bullocks and as Teddy (short for Teddybear). The play offers different types of speech. Nora Dan's conversation is peppered with traditional Irish phrases such as "Glory be to God"**(21)**. Jack attempts to imitate Barney's German: I hear you sell your house, Herr Gallagher--ja? I give you a fortune to buy it" **(58)**. He also engages in duplitious romantic double-talk: ". . . and I say this now very deliberately and with absolute sincerity--when it happened,

Susan, a part of me died" **(67)**. Barney the Banks speaks broken English with a German accent, misinterpreting the meaning of certain English words: " I leave them on the gulder for when he is not so gallagher" **(53)**. Claire Harkin speaks with a French accent: "I understand perfectly" **(33)**. Susan's speech patterns are replete with romantic "conventionalisms": "You're quaint. And unique. And mine" **(39)**. The entire play is a parody of Tim's proposed thesis on language with respect to order in the social structure, concerning itself with showing (literally) that the "code" of language, is in fact, emphatically not "fully shared and subscribed to" and that the message is anything but "comprehensively received" **(18)**.

I have selected this play as Friel's apotheosis of "verbal" Carnival - because of the myriad of ways in which the text is "carnivalized": the parody of language itself, the "carnivalized" names of the characters, the fact that so many characters speak in a different language or dialect--French, German,"traditional" Irish--and the multiple use and misuse of words referring to communication. This play emerges as the apotheosis of "carnivalized" text" in Friel's work because the "carnivalized" dramaturgy occasions a number of repercussions with respect to actual performance. For the language upside down, so to speak, that we witness here provides the juxtaposition of the verbal with the *visual*--we *hear* Nora Dan's traditional Irish, but we *see* that she is not a saintly old Irish peasant but a cunning, opportunistic country woman. We *hear* Dr. Donovan's eloquent endorsement of the cottage and the Irish tradition from which it emanantes but we *see* the cottage collapse. We *hear* Jack's espousals of fervent romantic affection to his old love Susan, but we *see* that he is a gigolo. The "dance of talk", in itself carnivalesque, begins to engage in another kind of "dance " when it becomes juxtaposed with the visual.

Dancing occupies a central place in many of Friel's plays and stories. One of the most notable examples (in combination with music) occurs in the play *Losers*, which is based on his short story, *The Highwayman and the Saint*. In both the play and the short story, the character Andy returns home from an alcoholic binge singing "God Save Ireland" at the top of his voice and waltzing madly around with a statue of St. Philomena. Here again we encounter the defiant gesture of protest versus the status quo. Andy raises

his voice in song to protest the tyranny of Hanna's pious mother whose invalidism and devotion to religion dominate the house. But Andy will marry Hanna and she will, in the course of the marriage, retreat from her temporary sexual hiatus with her new husband and transform herself into a devoted servant of her mother's regime. There are dancing passages in *Philadephia Here I Come!* (1964), *The Gentle Island* (1971),*The Freedom of the City* (1973), and *Living Quarters* (1977), to mention just a few that precede *The Communication Cord*. There is no actual dancing in this play, but there are several significant examples of *gesture* throughout the play which function in *opposition* to the power of the word. I have chosen to look at the place of movement and gesture in this play as part of the playwright's developing non-verbal or pre-verbal dramaturgy. Words in *The Communication Cord* are ultimately rendered powerless as a means of communication and cannot compete with the truth of movement/gesture. We have, then, the "double" vision which is the hallmark of the "carnivalesque" style--the parodic treatment of language *itself* and the juxtaposition dramaturgically of language *and* gesture with the consequent stylistic implications for production and performance of the parodic whole.

The ultimate "uncrowning" or "transformation downward" of language in juxtaposition with gesture (and in terms of actual production it constitutes, in reality, a literal transformation downward) is the scenario in which DR. DONOVAN attempts to explain or demonstrate the old Irish custom of milking the cow before bedtime and ends up, unwittingly on the floor, shackled by the cow chains. DR. DONOVAN'S consciously eloquent attempt to exalt this time-honored Irish tradition ultimately brings him to naught but bondage:

> DONOVAN: But let's bring our little scenario forward in time, let's say to the turn of the century. Right. The fireplace has moved up to the gable. This is now the heart of the home. That's where we warm ourselves. That's where we cook. That's where we kneel and pray. That's where we gather at night to tell our folk tales and our ancient sagas. Correct, Tim?
>
> ....

DONOVAN: So let us imagine it is night-time. Granny is asleep in the settle bed. My wife is knitting by the fireside, the children in a circle at her feet. I enter with my most valuable wordly possession--my cow! She knows the routine perfectly. With her slow and assured gait she crosses over there and stands waiting for me with her head beside the post where I have already placed a battle of hay. An interesting word that--"battle"--it must be Irish, Tim?

TIM: Scottish. Sixteenth century.

DONOVAN: Is it? Anyhow. I pick up my milking pail and my milking stool and I join her. I lift up the chain--(he demonstrates)--and bring it gently round her neck and secure it with the little clasp here--like this. Then I milk her. And when I'm finished, she'll stand here for another hour, perhaps two hours, just chewing her cud and listening to the reassuring sounds of a family preparing to go to bed. Then she will lie down and go to sleep. A magical scene, isn't it? It's a little scene that's somehow central to my psyche.

... (He (Tim) dashes over to THE DOCTOR who is squatting on the ground--as he demonstrated--and chained to a post. Whether he is crouching down or standing up (never to his full height) he is chained in such a way that he is locked into a position facing the wall. Only with great difficulty and pain can he see over his shoulder--(and then only a portion of the kitchen.)
(*Cord* 55-56)

The single, strongest Carnival image in the entire play is the sight of DR. DONOVAN, politician and doctor whose eloquence has been suddenly "transformed downward"--"Don't give me that shit!"--chained on the floor as the "cow", with the tights wrapped around his neck to stave off the blood where Jack has pierced him with the pliers in an unsuccessful attempt to free him, singing "Abide With Me" **(*Cord* 70)**.

The essential principle of grotesque realism is degradation, that is, the lowering of all that is high,

> spiritual, ideal, abstract; it is a transfer to the material level, to the sphere of earth and body in their indisoluble unity **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 19-20).**

The image is compounded at the end of the play when Jack attempts to show Claire and Tim how the cow should have been chained and ends up "clasped" as the cow in the same manner as the doctor. There are visual images at the end of the play on several counts. Jack ends up "trapped" in his pose as the cow, Claire and Tim end up kissing and in so doing lean against the upright which holds up the house and as the curtains descend, the cottage comes tumbling down, the door blows open and the lights goes out. The kiss--gesture "wins" in the final victory of the pre-verbal over the verbal element in this play. The play is about language; it celebrates its multiplicity of expression but ultimately makes the point that natural forces and drives will not bow to words and indeed, that they will cause their "downfall" in the same manner that the cottage, an inept facsimile, has its downfall. The gesture (the kiss) "brings the house down" literally in a double sense--the cottage crumbles and the play ends:

> *(They have now drifted across the stage together and end up leaning very gently against the upright supporting the loft. .)*
>
> CLAIRE: I feel the reverberations.
>
> TIM: I feel the reverberations.
>
> CLAIRE: And the desire to sustain the occasion.
>
> TIM: And saying anything, anything at all, that keeps the occasion going.
>
> JACK: Tim!
>
> CLAIRE: Maybe even saying nothing.
>
> TIM: Maybe. Maybe silence is the perfect discourse.

CLAIRE: Kiss me then.

TIM: I can scarcely hear you. Will you kiss me, Claire?

(*They kiss and hold that kiss until the play ends. As they kiss they lean heavily against the upright.*)

JACK: I'm stuck, Tim! Will you for God's sake come here and--
(*The upright begins to move. Sounds of timbers creaking..)*
Get away from the upright, Tim! You'll bring the roof down!

SUSAN: (*Off*) Jack?

JACK: D'you hear me, Gallagher?! Get away from the upright! Susan!

(SUSAN, *now dressed as in her first appearance, appears at the top of the stairs.*)

SUSAN: What's happening, Jack?! The floor's shaking!
(*She staggers down the shaking stairs.)*

JACK: The upright, Tim! Get away from it!

(*The curtains are pulled back.* NORA*'s head appears.*)

NORA: Jesus, Mary, Joseph, what's the noise?!

SUSAN: Jack!

(*The big door blows open. The lamp flickers--almost dies ---survives--almost dies. The sound of cracking timbers increases.*)

JACK: Watch the lamp!

SUSAN: Jack, where are you, Jack?!

NORA: What's happening?

JACK: Help! I'm trapped!

NORA: Jesus, Mary and Joseph, the house is falling in!

SUSAN: Jack, the place is...oogh!

JACK: O my God.

(*The lamp dies. Total darkness.*)
(*Cord* 84-86)

We have seen up to now the parody of language and the juxtaposition of word versus gesture, but the text is further "carnivalized" with respect to *gesture itself*. Gesture extending upon gesture proceeds a step further and illustrates how gesture also becomes inadequate or can be misunderstood as a form of communication. The excerpted mime sequence which follows between Jack and Tim constitutes a substantial example of gesture for its own sake. But more importantly, the stage directions which immediately follow turn gesture "upside down". The author has provided the actors playing the parts with an italicized "verbalization" or sub-text of the mime:

(*All eyes are on* THE DOCTOR *when Jack appears at the half-door--pretending he is the German. Only* TIM *sees him. Throughout part of* DONOVAN *'s* monologue TIM *and* JACK *mime the following exchange.*)

JACK: *I'm the German. I'm coming in. Okay?*

TIM: *No, no. Go away. Go away.*

JACK: *What's wrong? I love your house. I want to buy it .*

TIM: *For God's sake--go! The German was here .*

JACK: *Look. My cheque book. My pen. What money do you want?*

TIM: *Please, Jack! Go away!*

JACK: *And look at the time! Your time is up!*

TIM: *Please!)*

(At the very end of the mime above, SUSAN happens to glance at TIM. JACK immediately crouches down behind the half-door. But TIM is caught making his final impassioned 'Please! Aware that SUSAN is now looking at him, he converts the gesture into blowing a kiss to her.)
(*Cord* 54-55)

The Communication Cord possesses a multi-layered style in the "polytheatrical" tradition of *The Freedom of the City*. *The Freedom of the City* deals with three different "theatres" (three different plays, three different casts, three different languages, three different styles) each engaging in its separate discourse while simultaneously interacting with the other two. What emerges here is a kind of "carnivalization" of theatrical conventions--a parody of language, language versus gesture, a parody of gesture, and finally a parody not only of Irish tradition with the final crashing cottage but also a parody of the theatre itself. Language is transformed downward, Irish tradition crumbles and the "cottage" comes crashing down. We have witnessed Friel's dramaturgy evolve accordingly as the context of Carnival changes. The "verbal party" of *Philadelphia !* (in the service of alienation and exile) and *Freedom* (in the service of revolution and murder) becomes an object of investigation in itself in this play. It proceeds as far as it can and

then engages with the pre-verbal energy of gesture. In *Dancing*, the pre-verbal becomes an object of investigation. But first we must explore another aspect of pre-verbal energy--music. And in moving beyond language, we move beyond Ireland.

Fathers and Sons (1987) : The "Russian" Carnival Connection

> "Lughnasa" and almost all his other plays take place in Ballybeg, a mythical town in Donegal invented by Friel. In Gaelic, it is baile beag, and literally means small town.
> For Friel, it is a Ballybeg of the mind. While he denies it has the specificity of Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha, it is a microcosm of rural Ireland, and by inference, it represents small towns around the world.
>
> Though he has occasionally written a play with an urban setting, his artistic home is Ballybeg. For this and other reasons, he is often compared with Chekhov. Besides the fact that both are short-story writers as well as playwrights, they share an empathy for those who are trapped in seemingly ordinary lives and for the importance of provincial place as an adjunct of character. There are societal changes in the background, but the people remain landlocked within their emotional environment.
>
> **(*Gussow* 55)**

In Chapter 1, I spoke of the particular Irish context for Carnival, that of colonization. With respect to the plays considered here *Philadelphia Here I Come!* deals with culture in its Irish-American context, *The Freedom of the City* with Ireland-England and *The Communication Cord* with Ireland itself. The context of Carnival in all three plays is Ireland herself--in relationship to community and exile, to revolution and possible freedom, and to language and tradition. Carnival is the second life, it is the uncrowning of authority and the status quo, it is parodic travesty. In the space between *The Communication Cord* and *Dancing at Lughnasa* we encounter Friel turning his attention to another culture, quite distinct from, yet similar to, that of Ireland: Russia. With *The Three Sisters* (1983) and *Fathers And Sons* (1987),

he is experimenting with yet another aspect of language, translation in the first instance and adaptation in the second.

There are two reasons why I choose to investigate *Fathers and Sons* in the context of Carnival. It does not offer a new context thematically--we have seen how all three previous examples have differed in this regard. It is, rather, reflective of all three. We are introduced to the Russian equivalent of Ballybeg, the politics of Russia, and the icons of Russian tradition. We have seen in Chapter 1 how the rites of Carnival pervaded various early cultures from the Greeks and the Romans to the Druids--the manifestation of each being slightly different, but the essential heart of each being quite similar. The "Russian" plays are a crucial cultural link to *Dancing At Lughnasa,* which deals explicitly with the ceremonies and festive rites of African culture as well as with those of Ireland. It also provides a dramaturgical link with regard to a dramaturgy which is moving (albeit slowly) from one that is primarily verbal to one which juxtaposes the verbal and the visual in a more explicit way than formerly. The shift from Ireland to Russia to Africa and the move from the word to the gesture and in this instance to *music* is not accidental. With the explicit consideration of a culture other then that of Ireland, there is the corresponding focus on the pre-verbal forces which surmount the particular verbal parameters of any given culture, thus unifying it with other cultures.

Music, like dance, has occupied the dramaturgy of Friel's plays long before *Fathers and Sons. Philadephia Here I Come!* (1964), *Lovers* (1967), *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1968), *Faith Healer* (1979), to mention just a few, all possess copious instances of music/singing. *Aristocrats* (1979) has an elaborate musical score--the stage directions list five different musical pieces to be played throughout the play. The dance and music elements in Friel's dramaturgy are incorporated into the context of the whole so to speak--are, in fact, integrated with the actual text. In the case of *Aristocrats,* the music "sets up" certain scenes. Both the "Russian" plays progress one step further dramaturgically and substitute, or take the place of, or *act as,* the text. If *The Communication Cord* illustrated the triumph of the movement/gesture over the word in visual/verbal juxtaposition, the "Russian" plays reveal the *extension* of the *word* into music and dance (gesture). This extension is

indicated by the playwright many times throughout these plays through his explicit stage directions. In *Fathers and Sons*, we find a play musically "scored" in much the same way that *Aristocrats* is, in that a number of musical numbers are listed as part of the action for each Act. The idea of the music/dance becoming the extension and eventually the replacement of the spoken words is apparent in the second act of *Fathers and Sons*. Arkady has come to visit Arina and Vassily, the parents of his best friend, Bazarov, who has recently died. In Act 1, we have witnessed the great, all-consuming love Vassily and Arina have for Bazarov, their only son--a love they dare not show for Bazarov does not approve of displays of affection. With respect to the couple themselves, we have come to know Arina, the wife, as the stronger and more outspoken of the couple, the one who definitely "takes charge" of her loquacious but somewhat scattered husband. But now, after the death of her son, the relationship has reversed itself. Arina, it appears, has lost her mind with grief, and her husband must care for her as he would a small child. In this reversal of roles, Arina is "transformed downward", and her role reversal in this relationship is illustrated through the use of gesture and music in the stage directions:

> (*ARINA enters, her hair dishevelled, wearing slippers and an odd assortment of clothes. When she enters her face is vacant. Then she sees VASSILY and she smiles. VASSILY greets her with great warmth and enthusiasm. ARKADY gets to his feet.*)
>
> VASSILY: Ah--Arina! Now that's an improvement! Now you're looking really well, my pet! Do you know that you slept for almost three hours? And who's going to do the housework if my wife lies in bed and spends the day sleeping? Tell me that, my sweet and beautiful wife? And look who's here! Look who's come to see us!
>
> (*She looks blankly at ARKADY.*)
>
> Yes! It's Arkady, my pet! It is, indeed! Arkady Nikolayevich! The very moment he heard he came

straight over. He was afraid he'd have to leave without seeing you.

ARKADY: All I can say, Arina Vlasseyevna--(*He begins to cry again.*)--all I can say is that--that-that-I'm shattered, just shattered.

VASSILY: We've looked after ourselves as you can see. But what we've got to do now is get you something to eat. What can I offer you? What would tempt you? I have it! Arina Vlassyevna is partial to a cup of blackcurrent tea! the very thing!

ARKADY: I'll never forgive myself that I wasn't here. I was away in Petersburg. I didn't hear a thing until late last night.

VASSILY: (*Busy, breezy*) One small cup of blackcurrent tea and two very tiny but very appetizing home-made biscuits--that's what this aristocratic lady requires and that is what she is going to eat. What does Cicero say? *Tantum cibi et potionis*--we should drink and eat just enough to restore our strength--no more, no less.

ARKADY: I can't tell you how devestated I am. I know I'll never get over it.

(ARINA *now sits.* Pause. *She looks at* ARKADY *as if she were trying to remember him, as if she were going to speak to him. Her face is placid, child-like, almost smiling. And when she sings it is the gentle, high-pitched voice of a very young girl.*)

ARINA: (Sings) *Te Deum laudamus: te Dominum confitemur. Te aeternum Patrem omnis terra veneratur.*
(*As soon as she begins singing* ARKADY *looks in alarm at* VASSILY. VASSILY *responds by putting his finger to his lips and shaking his head as if to say--Say nothing; don't interrupt. Then he sits beside his wife, puts both arms round her, and sings with her and directly to her* :)

VASSILY & ARINA:
Tibi omnes Angeli, tibi Caeli et universae Potestates.
Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim incessabili voce proclament:
Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus Dominus Deus Sabaoth.
(Slowly bring down the lights as they sing together.) [10]

There are a couple of possibilities here with respect to interpreting the*Te Deum* [11] in the context of Carnival at the end of this scene. One way of perceiving the scene is as two deaths--not only the death of Bazarov , but in a sense the "death" of Arina as well. We have here the juxtaposition of death with life, of defeat with celebration. The "transformation downward" of Arina into madness, into childhood, is juxtaposed with the *Te Deum* which, as the excerpt points out, is traditionally used on great occasions that call for victory and or rejoicing. "Uncrowned", Arina is "transformed downwards" from her former sanity; the status between Arina and Vassily is reversed. Given the "splendid" history of the *Te Deum* , the change may be heralded as a renewal, a harbinger of something better to come. Perhaps Bazarov has not died in vain. Perhaps the renewal extends beyond Vassily and Arina to Russia itself.

It is also possible that the music is used here in ironic reference. In this instance, the playwright would again be relying on the familiarity of this piece in the minds and hearts of several audiences, but this paean of praise and thanksgiving, would be interpreted as a deliberate travesty of Arina's (and Russia's) tragedy. The evolution of the *Te Deum* involves its "universal" significance, its history of cutting across cultural lines rather than emanating from one tradition. Perhaps the playwright has deliberately selected this music to exacerbate the ambiguity of the scene. Both interpretations encompass a carnivalesque "dialogue" of music and gesture with the tragic context. The "truth" (here, of interpretation), as Bakhtin has pointed out before, is born of the interaction of "two" dialogical forces, not of unity. The Carnival elements here as in *The Freedom of the City* play on a

sense of ambiguity and disparity of meaning. One could ask the question, "Is ambiguity of meaning or interpretation an inevitable corollary to the carnivalesque? Is disparity of meaning a logical consequence of the carnivalesque? Is no real "answer" intended but rather does the "dialogic" essence of Carnival resolve itself only by another question (s), by the possiblity of choice, by leaving the matter continuously "unsolved?" This is an important consideration for *Dancing* and I will refer to this point again in Chapter Three.

The play offers another instance of music/gesture as an extension of text, and this time the context for Carnival definitively combines "uncrowning"and "transformation downward" with parody. At the very end of the play we are faced with the impending marriages of Nikolai/Fenitchka and Arkady/Katya. Nikolai loves Fenitchka, who originally appreciated his love and the new status it conferred upon her as the mistress of the house, but who does not now return the same passion. Her status has changed, transformed, from one who was at one time grateful for a bed in the house of her master to one who has taken on her role as mistress with a vengeance, taking her husband and his estate in hand and reneging on her former easy relations with the other servants. Katya loves Arkady, for whom this marriage represents a tremendous compromise of his political and philosophical beliefs, the betrayal of which might ultimately cause him to despise himself (and her). But these *words* are never actually spoken by either of these characters and are instead revealed through the use of music/gesture :

> (*Bring up the accordion playing "Drink to me only".)*
>
> FENITCHKA: Listen, Nikolai.
>
> NIKOLAI: (*To* KATYA) That clever musician--he picked it up from you.
>
> (*They all listen for a few seconds.*)

That was our song, long, long ago. Maria and I. I sang the melody and she sang the seconds. Our party piece. Her eyelids fluttered when she sang. Shakespeare wrote the words--did you know that?

(*He begins to sing.* FENITCHKA *watches him with a strained smile. He puts his arm around her and hugs her.*)
Sing!

(*She gives him an uncertain smile but does not sing.*)

KATYA *moves beside* ARKADY. *She catches his hand. She begins to sing and sings the words directly into his face. He does not sing.*

PAVEL *moves across to* ANNA *who is sitting away from the others. He catches her hand.*)

PAVEL: Do you sing?

ANNA: Occasionally. When I'm alone.

PAVEL: Yes. *Je comprends ...*

NIKOLAI & KATYA:

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine;
Or leave a kiss but in the cup
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise
Doth ask a drink divine;
But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine.

(*Fathers and Sons* 94-95)

Fenitchka does not sing; Arkady does not sing. Their attitudes to their respective marriages are revealed only through gesture, in their non-verbal refusal to sing which is their refusal to concur with the festivities. *Drink to Me Only* was not written by Shakespeare but by Ben Jonson and is

traditionally used at weddings. The carnivalesque counter-festivities (traditionally known as the "charivari" or "rough music") which accompanied the official wedding festivities have undergone thorough exploration in many "carnivalized" texts, the most notable being the Pyramus and Thisbe wedding of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The following quotation is excerpted from Michael Bristol's *Carnival and Theater* :

> The complexity of marriage as an institution was objectified and worked though in a variety of representational forms. The community could express itself through a variety of social dramas, gossip, public quarrels and the more organized public forms of the archdeacon's court. The organization of marriage, its structural rules and characteristic transgressions, could also be represented in a complex of festive forms, which included both the ceremonial formalities of the wedding and the informal and irregular counter-festivities of charivari or "rough music". This complex of festive customs provides the necessary procedures for a transition that has significance both for the bride and groom and for the community to which they belong. The formalities solemnize the bond between the parents and constitute an image of personal and social harmony. The counter-festivities have a variety of functions. Because the community reserves to itself certain rights of surveillance and regulation of sexual conduct, the charivari may be used for admonitory purposes; related to this admonitory function, the charivari is also used to redress grievance or chastise impropriety **(Bristol 164-165).**

The non-verbal refusals (the decision not to sing) of Fenitchka and Arkady are not to be compared to the formal charivari activities such as the bachelor party, and they are not here refuting the sexual exclusivity of marriage; but they may be interpreted as a kind of counter-festivity, a gesture which opposes the status of marriage and all that it represents within the community. Their refusals to sing redress the grievance that is conventional marriage, chastise the impropriety of two people coming together in wedlock

when, in fact, they are not in love. When looked at from this point of view, the "official" festivity of the marriage ceremony will not constitute "personal and social harmony". The "official festivity" becomes symbolic not of a fuller, richer, expression of life, both conjugal and communal, but rather as an active containment of all that is loving, sexual, pleasurable, life-giving and right. The song in this instance becomes a parody, a harbinger of *death* (figuratively), despite the context of rejoicing. It "uncrowns" conventional marriage. *Drink To Me Only* parodies, travesties, the festive occasion it should by rights endorse.

From *Philadelphia Here I Come!* to *Fathers and Sons* we have witnessed the dramaturgical evolution from the verbal--the "celebration" of language in myriad ways--to a pre-verbal energy with an emphasis on gesture and music. *Dancing At Lughnasa* moves beyond the confines and barriers of the spoken word to a consideration of ritual, ceremony, festivity, of which dance and music are integral parts. By deliberately removing the "carnival" of his plays from its specifically Irish context with its specific history of colonization, oppression and violence, the context of Carnival now begins to turn outward and encompass these questions with respect to culture itself--Irish, Russian, and in the context of *Dancing*, African.

> Friel becomes the Irish Chekhov because for him the world is not Ireland writ large but Ireland is the world writ small. A society in search of its identity must know the pathways and holy places of the mind as surely as it knows its streets, hedgerows and sheeptracks. The metaphor he employs, that of mapmaking, is both peculiarly Irish and peculiarly Russian. Friel's Chekhovian world combines an insistence on the importance of the everyday experience with the "if only" of the theatre of hope. In his work, as in Beckett's, therefore, we find an acute awareness of the tragi-comic, precisely because the outsider, the deviant, the wanderer, the rebel, are central, rather than peripheral, to the way in which Irish society, like Russian society exercises itself. This is the lesson and legacy of a colonial past, a provincialism which is still being worked through in a self-conscious search for currency (***Pine*** **3-4**).

END NOTES

[1] Richard Pine, *Brian Friel and Ireland's Drama* (London and New York: Routledge, Chapman and Hall, 1991) 227.

[2] Mel Gussow, "From Ballybeg to Broadway", *New York Times Magazine* September 1991: 61.

[3] George O'Brien, *Brian Friel* (Boston: G.K. Hall & Co., 1990) 50.

[4] Brian Friel, *Philadelphia Here I Come! Selected Plays of Brian Friel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) 35-37.

[5] Ulick O'Connor, *Brian Friel: Crisis and Commitment; The Writer and Northern Ireland* (Dublin: Elo Publications, March 1989) 4.

[6] Jan Kott, *The Bottom Translation; Marlowe and Shakespeare and the Carnival Tradition,* trans. Daniela Miedzyrzecka and Lillian Vallee (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1987) 21.

[7] Brian Friel, *The Freedom of the City. Selected Plays of Brian Friel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) 135-136.

[8] Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, 132.

The following quotation is excerpted from the above-mentioned work:

> When Pushkin said that the art of the theater was "born in the public square, " the square he had in mind was that of the "common people," the square of bazaars, puppet theaters, taverns, that is the square of European cities in the thirteenth, fourteenth and subsequent centuries. He also had

> in mind the fact that the state and "official" society (that is, the privileged classes), with their "official" arts and sciences, were located by and large beyond the square. But the square in earlier (ancient times) itself constituted a state (and more--it constituted the entire state apparatus, with all its official organs), it was the highest court, the whole of science, the whole of art, the entire people participated in it. It was a remarkable chronotope, in which all the most elevated categories, from that of the state to that of revealed truth, were realized concretely and fully incarnated, made visible and given a face. And in this concrete and as it were all-encompassing chronotope, the laying bare and examination of a citizen's whole life was accomplished, and received its public and civic stamp of approval.

Bakhtin provides a second definition of the Carnival square in *Doestoevski's Poetics*,106.

> The carnival square--the square where the carnival performances took place--acquired an additional symbolic nuance which broadened and deepened its meaning. In carnivalized literature the square, as the setting of the plot's action, becomes bilevelled and ambivalent; it is as if through the actual square, one could see the carnival square, the scene of free, familiar contact and of crownings and discrownings carried out by the whole people. Other places of action (ones which are, of course, motivated by the plot and by reality), if they can in any way be the scene of meetings and contacts of diverse people--streets, taverns, roads, baths, the decks of ships, etc.--take on the additional significance of the carnival square. (Given the naturalistic way in which these places are represented, the universal symbolism of carnival has no fear of naturalism.)

[9] Brian Friel, *The Communication Cord* (London: Faber & Faber, 1983) 11.
Subsequent references in the text will identify the play as *Cord*.

[10] Brian Friel, *Fathers and Sons, after the novel by Ivan Turgenev* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) 79-80.
Subsequent references in the text will identify the play as *Fathers and Sons.*

[11] Denis Arnold, ed., *The New Oxford Companion to Music,* Vol 2 K-Z (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 1808-1809.

I have excerpted here the complete definition of the *Te Deum* as it is represented in the above-mentioned work. With the exception of the names "Te Deum","Benedicite" and the phrase"musica enchiriadis", the italics are mine:

> The long hymn which constitutes the *supreme expression of rejoicing in the Roman Catholic, Anglican, and other Christian Churches.* The Roman Catholic breviary calls it the canticle of Ambrose and Augustine, from the legend that *at the baptism of Augustine by Ambrose it was sung antiphonally, extempore, by the two saints.* Actually it may have originated in the Gallican or Mozarbic liturgy (see Liturgy, 2a), and its authorship has been put down to both Hilary, Bishop of Poitiers, in the 4th century and Hilary of Arles in the 5th; in either case it seems as through portions of an older hymn were incorporated. Another ascription, now very generally accepted, is to Nicetas of Remesiana, a Dacian bishop of the early 5th century. *However, the content and arrangement of the Te Deum clearly indicate that it is not a unity, and probably the minds and hearts of a number of writers of different places and different periods express themselves in it.*
>
> In the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church the *Te Deum* finds a place as *the outpouring of praise at the moment of climax of the service of Matins on sundays and festivals.* In the Anglican Church the English version is a *part of the service of Morning Prayer,* except when replaced by the *Benedicite* .
>
> The traditional plainchant to the Latin hymn is of a *very magnificent* character. In Anglican cathedrals and larger churches elaborate "service" settings are used (see Service), and in smaller

churches series of Anglican chants or nowadays frequently, simple "service" settings. The most popular *Te Deum* ever in use in England was that of William Jackson of Exeter (1730-1803), in the service 'Jackson in F', which was for a century sung from *every village choirloft* . Any musician of taste must call it trivial, *yet there was something in the simplicity of its means and the broad effects obtained by them that carried it into the hearts of the whole church-going population of the nation.*

Naturally, the hymn has inspired innumerable composers of all periods, and many of their settings, from the late 17th century onwards, have been on extended lines, with solos, choruses, and orchestral accompaniment. The earliest polyphonic setting is in the 9th-century *Musica enchiriadis,* but there are few settings by important composers before the 16th century, when many English composers, such as Taverner, Sheppard, Redford, and Blitheman, chose it. Important settings have been made by Purcell (for *St. Cecelia's Day,* 1694), Handel (for the *Peace of Utrecht* , 1713, and for the *Victory of Dettingen* , 1743), Graun (written after the *Battle of Prague,* 1757), Berlioz (for the Paris exhibition of 1855, and composed on a huge scale, with three choirs, and large instrumental forces), Bruckner (1885), Dvorak (1896), Verdi (1898), Stanford (using the Latin words, 1898), Parry (Latin original, 1900, English adaptation, 1913; also, another for the *coronation of George V* in 1911), Kodaly (for the *250th anniversary of the end of the Turkish occupation of Buda* (1936), Britten (1934), and Walton (for the *coronation of Elizabeth II,* 1953).

A solemn *Te Deum* is ordered on all occasions of *rejoicing in Christian countries,* so that throughout history *nations opposed in war have used the same hymn to thank God for their victories over one another.*

Chapter Three: *Dancing At Lughnasa* : The Irish/African Carnival

> "Any life in the arts is delicate," Friel says. "You've got to forge rules for yourself, not for the sake of moral improvement but for the sake of survival. Rule number one would be to not be associated with institutions or directors. I don't want a tandem to develop. Institutions are enclined to enforce characteristics, impose an attitude or a voice or a response. I think you're better off to keep away from all of them. It's for that reason that I didn't give *Dancing at Lughnasa* to Field Day to produce.
>
> "Another rule would be to explore different themes in each play you write. I find once you've lived with a play for two years, you become adjusted by the text, that the play adjusts you. It fashions you, it shapes you in a certain way. Once you accomplish a play, it always provides you with a stance. Therefore that stance has instantly got to be subverted. Otherwise, you could find yourself developing a kind of moral orthodoxy, a theology." **(*Lahr* 180)**

Dancing At Lughnasa premiered at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Tuesday, April 24, 1990. This Abbey production was produced by Noel Pearson and directed by Patrick Mason.[1] There is some very recent information that illustrates the widespread attention the production has commanded on several fronts :

> In Dublin this week, shooting began on "Ballybeg to Broadway", a 30-minute documentary on the making of "Dancing at Lughnasa," last season's Tony Award winner for best play. Noel Pearson, the producer of both the play and the documentary, says, " It will encompass all that has happened from the Abbey Theater to London and Broadway." He says the film will include interviews with the playwright Brian Friel, who ordinarily shuns the

> spotlight and did not appear on the Tony broadcast to accept his award.
>
> Mr. Pearson says the documentary, to be seen in Ireland at Christmas and here next spring, will be narrated by the actor Donal McCann. Included with the interviews will be film from the Tony Awards and the Olivier Awards, London's equivalent, and clips of productions of "Lughnasa" in German, Finnish and Spanish.[2]

I have outlined in Chapter Two how *The Freedom of the City* with its multifaceted, carnivalesque verbal/visual dramaturgy constituted a departure from, and extension on, the carnivalesque discourse which characterized Friel's early plays, notably, in this thesis, that of Public Gar and Private Gar in *Philadelphia Here I Come*! It is my intention to show that *Dancing At Lughnasa*, following in the dramaturgical wake of *The Communication Cord* (1983) and *Fathers and Sons* (1987), explicitly explores the dramaturgical use of dance/music as well as words as a dramatic medium even as it thematically engages the nature of ritual, celebration and ceremony--of which dance/music is an integral part. It is a fitting choice for the repertoire of the Abbey, whose "carnivalesque" inception I have explored in Chapter One. The poet Seamus Heaney identifies Friel as a writer who likes to "unsettle pieties".[3] This "subversive" attitude both toward the themes of plays and productions is especially pertinent to *Dancing At Lughnasa* , which might be characterized as an investigation of the subversion principle (which is the essence of Carnival), primarily though dance. We have seen in Chapter Two how Friel's long playwrighting career has been an exercise in both thematic and dramaturgical subversion. He writes about community and exile, about revolution and murder, about parody. His plays are a celebration of language; they are a parody of language. They feature one central protagonist; they feature an ensemble. George O'Brien in his recent study *Brian Friel* points out that from *Freedom* onward the concept of "family" is developed and dealt with in Friel's plays--family in the extended sense as well as in the more obvious nuclear one. In *Dancing At Lughnasa* Friel continues in the pursuit of this dramaturgically collective vision in a different arena. In this play he speaks to an "international" sensibility utterly

dislocated from the Irish experience. Simultaneously, it calls on his particular experience as an Irish Catholic writer in the North of Ireland:

> The time when I first began to wonder what it was to be an Irish Catholic . . .to survey and analyse the mixed holding I had inherited, the personal, traditional and acquired knowledge that cocooned me, an Irish Catholic teacher with a nationalist background, living in a schizophrenic community . . . . What I hope is emerging is . . . a faith, a feeling for life, a way of seeing life, the patient assembly of a superstructure which imposes a discipline and within which work can be performed in the light of an insight, a group of ideas, a carefully cultivated attitude; or, as Seamus Heaney puts it . . .there are only certain stretches of ground over which the writer's divining rod will come to live **(*Pine* 227).**

The play does concern itself with prior Friel themes--community and exile, revolution, language, etc.--but the primary thematic axis on which it hinges is the consideration of the "pagan" forces which feed into the composition of ceremony, ritual, celebration, whether in Ireland, Africa or wherever. Prior to investigating the festive "Saturnalian" dramaturgy which informs this theme of Carnival, it is necessary to look briefly at the particular place Ireland itself occupies with respect to ritual, both Christian and "pagan".

The Carnivalesque in Irish Legends and The Feast of Lughnasa:

Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* refers to both the Celtic and subsequent Christian traditions in the Irish carnivalesque canon, of the intrinsic connection of the sacred with the profane, of the spiritual with the carnal or corporal. He cites a fourth-century work entitled *Visio Pauli* (the Vision of Paul), a Christian version of antiquity's version of the underworld (Hades) which apparently evolved into many different versions in the Middle Ages. This particular work, he claims, "strongly influenced the mighty torrent of Irish legends concerning paradise and hell, which played an immense role in the history of medieval literature" **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 388).**

In discussing the relationship of the lower parts of the body to death and the underworld, he declares that in medieval legends these "holes" in Europe were believed to be the entrances to purgatory or hell and that in familiar speech "the word had an obscene connotation":

> The most commonly known landmark was "Saint Patrick's hole" in Ireland, believed to be the entrance to purgatory. Pilgrimages were made to this site as early as the twelfth century, and it was surrounded by legends to which we shall later return. At the same time, the name Saint Patrick's hole had indecent overtones.
> **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 388)**

The sea to the northwest of Ireland was believed to be full of mystery and its roaring waves likened to the "moans of the dead" **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 98)**. Bakhtin claims that the literature of Lucian and Plutarch was inspired by these Irish tales as were Rabelais' own writings. I have included one of Bakhtin's Celtic examples of the carnivalesque here, the story of St. Brendan's voyage "The Travels of St. Brendan" (*Navigation sancti Brendani*). It is an ancient Christianized Irish myth which apparently was written in the tenth century and appeared in many versions, both in prose and in poetry. I have italicized one phrase to point out with specific reference to Ireland the intrinsic Carnival connection of the rites of Christianity with those of "paganism":

> St. Brendan and seventeen monks of his monastery sailed from Ireland in search of paradise, to the northwest, toward the polar regions. (This is also Pantagruel's route.) The voyage lasted seven years. St. Brendan sailed from island to island, as did Pantagruel, ever discovering new wonders. On one of these isles he found white sheep as large as deer. On another he saw gigantic trees with red leaves; white birds perched on their branches were singing the praise of God. On another one deep silence reigned, and lamps shone at the time of the holy office. The old man described in the legend is much like Rabelais' Macrobius. The travelers had to

> celebrate Easter on a shark's back, and there is in Rabelais an episode picturing a whale. St. Brendan witnesses a fight between a dragon and a griffin and observes a sea serpent and other monsters. The monks overcome all the dangers, thanks to their piety. At one time they see a sapphire altar rising from the sea. They pass by the opening leading to hell from which a cloud of fire rises. Near the "jaws of hell" they find Judas sitting on a small rock surrounded by stormy waves. He rests from his torment on feast days. Finally, they reach the gates of paradise; its walls of precious stones glisten with topazes, amethysts, amber, and onyx. A heavenly messenger permits them to visit paradise. They see lush meadows, flowers, trees laden with fruit. A sweet fragrance fills the air. The woods are inhabited by gentle beasts; rivers of milk flow through the grounds, and the dew is made of honey. It is neither hot nor cold. There is no hunger, no sadness....*In this legend Christian ecclesiastical ideas are combined with contrasting popular images*. The images are still powerful and lend their charm to the legend. Paradise is a popular utopian kingdom of material bodily abundance and peace; it is the golden age of Saturn, where there are no wars, no suffering, but material wealth. Plutarch precisely located Saturn's abode on one of the isles of the Irish sea. Thus in this pious poem, as in Goshelin's mystic vision, we hear the ever-present overtone of the Saturnalias.
> **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 399)**

The following description of the Feast of Lughnasa is a much shorter version of what appears in the Dublin, London and New York programs for *Dancing*. Throughout the whole of Ireland and in parts of Great Britian and France a festival to celebrate the beginning of harvest was held every year in early August. In Ireland it was called Lughnasa after Lugh, the pagan god who had provided the rich crops. (Lugh is the Irish counterpart to the Greek Hermes or the Roman Mercury). Mountain tops, wells, river-banks and lakes were the usual sites for the primal rites. These rites varied from place to place and generation to generation but included the sacrifice of animals, the first solemn cutting of the corn or wheat and the eating of bread, cakes and

potatoes made from the first digging of La Lughnasa, the first day of the festival. One of the more lasting customs associated with the feast was the picking of the small dark-blue bilberries which were emblematic of the earth's fruitfulness and perceived as a gift from the deity: "And it was important that everyone would eat them and that some should be brought home to the old and the weak who were not able to climb the hill." The boys apparently sometimes made bracelets of the bilberries for the girls and after the making of the bracelets, the singing of rounds begun. Chief among the celebrations connected to the feast was dancing. Lughnasa dancing competitions were held all over Ireland and in County Donegal (the site of *Dancing*); the prize for the best male dancer was his choice of bride from among all the female contestants. The following quotation offers ample evidence that the concept of Carnival (as I have defined it in Chapter 1 with specific reference to the Roman Catholic church) is intrinsically connected to the Lughnasa tradition:

> The Lughnasa festival was so important in the lives of the people and so involved their notions of welfare that Christianity had to adopt it or permit it to survive. "It could not crush it as it may have crushed observances at the other quarterly feasts," MacNeill says. " It succeeded in turning the most important assemblies into Christian devotions . . .but in taking them over it took over inevitably some of the old stories altered only in making a saint, not a god, the people's champion.[4]

Friel credits his idea for the play to a visit to London in 1987, where walking along the Thames Embankment with the playwright Tom Kilroy, after having just seen a performance of Friel's (Turgenev's)*Fathers and Sons*, they passed many homeless men and women sleeping in doorways and alleys. Friel himself had two maiden aunts who ended up destitute and abandoned in London, and the incident inspired him to write a play about it. **(*Gussow* 30)**

Dancing At Lughnasa opens in August of 1936 during the first few days of the annual Lughnasa (harvest) celebration in Ballybeg , County Donegal, Ireland. The entire action of the play takes place in and around the home of

the five unmarried Mundy sisters, two miles from the village of Ballybeg. Kate, the oldest sister, teaches school and Chrissie, the youngest sister, is the mother of the illegitimate child, Michael. Maggie is the housekeeper and Agnes and Rose bring in a minimal amount of income knitting gloves at home. We become immediately aware that the sisters' lives are marginal both economically and socially. Their days revolve around making mash for the hens, bringing in the turf, cooking, knitting and their "gift for Celtic chat".[5] The Feast of Lughnasa; the return of Uncle Jack, the "leper priest" from Ryanga; the two visits of Gerry Evans, the boy Michael's father; and the acquisition of the radio, Marconi; form the basis of celebration (Carnival) around which the play will revolve. In addition to the multifarious theatrical style which characterizes the play's composition I have counted copious references in this play to dance, music/singing, eating, drinking, money, death, sex, disguise, role reversal, the giving of gifts, etc.[6] It is impossible in a thesis of this size to explore all these elements of Carnival thoroughly. I have therefore elected to select those elements which emerge as particularly noteworthy to the context of Carnival in this particular play: the exploration of the nature of ceremony, celebration, festivity and all that entails. I have equally based my selections as indicative of a dramaturgy which I have previously identified as increasingly overwhelmingly visual and musical. The play's "festive" structure informs the theme of festivity in itself:

1. **The "Carnivalesque" Structure of the Play** : Its basic dialectical dramaturgical composition which extends to the setting and properties and costumes. The particular significance of these to Carnival.

2. **Dance/Music** : The exploration of the five major dance/music sequences of the play. I have explored the use of gesture in *The Communication Cord* and gesture/music in *Fathers and Sons*, but this is the first fully explicit investigation of dance/music passages. How the context of Carnival is different for each sequence--each one emphasizing a different or several different aspects.

3. **Act II : The Final Banquet** : A dramaturgical exploration of this particular portion of the play which celebrates the final days of Lughnasa and contains

many examples of different carnivalesque activities of which dance and music are a part. How this carnivalesque dramaturgy informs the thematic Carnival of the play--the nature of celebration /festivity.

1. The" Carnivalesque" Structure Of the Play:

a. The "Dialogical Style": Monologues and Scenes:

First, we have the juxtaposition of Michael's monologues as narrator with the various scenes between characters engaging in a variety of carnivalesque activities. We have witnessed this style previously in Friel, notably in *The Freedom of the City*. We are presented with the narrator's comments in the present and the "story" presented in the flashbacks. This juxtaposition necessitates *two* acting styles: presentational (the narration) and representational (the "carnivalesque" scenes). Unlike *Freedom*, the monologues and scenes here are interconnected, so that there is not the same sense of two entirely different levels of consciousness. The structure is reminiscent of *The Freedom of the City* but is not as complex because one rather than several characters delivers the descriptive monologues.

b. The Multifarious Monologues:

There are five monologues throughout two acts delivered by Michael, the narrator, and they differ considerably in structure among themselves. Three of the monologues are directly juxtaposed with the "action" of the "other" theatre (scenes) simultaneously. These occur at the opening of the play, at the end of Act I and at the closing of the play. Two of the monologues (one in Act I, one in Act II) function by themselves without any visual juxtaposition.

i. Monologue #1 - **Michael Introduces the Agents of Carnival**

This monologue at the top of Act 1 opens the play, and we are introduced to the feast of Lughnasa, the return of Uncle Jack, the two visits of Gerry, Michael's father to Ballybeg and the advent of the radio "Marconi" into the lives of the five sisters in the summer of 1936. **Visual juxtaposition**: the

opening "tableau" of the play, explicitly set out in the stage directions, with the entire cast taking up certain stationary positions which they hold for the duration of the monologue.

ii. Monologue #2 - **The Father Jack Monologue**

The monologue which Michael delivers in the middle of the first scene of Act 1 introduces us to Father Jack before we have officially met Father Jack in the context of a scene. **No visual juxtaposition**.

iii. Monologue #3 - **Michael's Predictions for the Future**

This monologue takes place at the end of Act 1 and lets us know before it actually happens in the course of the play that Rose and Agnes will leave Ballybeg forever. It also describes the dance without music that Gerry will dance with Chrissie. **Visual juxtaposition**: Father Jack attempts to dance out his own dance from the rhythm he creates by rubbing two pieces of wood, portions of the kites, together.

iv. Monologue #4 - **Michael Foretells Death**:

Like monologue #2, this takes place in the middle of the Act (this time Act II) and predicts the fate of Agnes and Rose in England, Jack's death and the death of Michael's father, Gerry. It functions as part of and directly precedes many of the carnivalesque activities of what I have chosen to call **The Final Banquet**. **No visual juxtaposition**.

v. Monologue #5 - **Michael Looks Back:**

The closing monologue of the play where Michael chiefly remembers the music and dance of those 1936 summer afternoons, **Visual juxtaposition**: The closing tableau with the entire company taking up positions similar to

those they held during the opening monologue of Act 1. This time the stage directions indicate that the entire company sways "very slightly" (*Dancing* **71)** as the monologue is being spoken.

c. The "Double" role of the Narrator: Michael the narrator of the monologues also appears in the flashback "scenes" as the child Michael. The convention is established that the child is imaginary and the adult actor of the monologues "plays" the part of the child This is similar, but not identical to, the convention of the two Gars in *Philadelphia!* the major difference being that the two Gars were performed by two different actors, not one. Here the narrator plays both adult and child, and unlike *Freedom* where the narration and the scenes function simultaneously but separately, he delivers the monologue but also functions as part of the scenes.

d. The Carnivalesque Time Sequence of the Play:

The play does not operate in a linear time sequence but moves freely through past, present and future, and not always in that order. The scenes take place in the past from the point of view of the narrator and the audience. The audience is continually made privy to the "futures" of the characters through the narrator. One example: Act 1 opens with Michael's monologue **(Michael introduces the Agents of Carnival)** in the present and proceeds, with a lighting change, to the past-- specifically the last weeks of summer, 1936. We move forward to Michael in the present with the **Father Jack** monologue and back to the past--the summer of 1936--to the scene between Kate and the imaginary child.

e. The "Dialectic" Setting and the "Offstage" Carnival:

> The play is well served by the production. The set by Joe Vanek is as haunting and evocative as the text. The main feature is the kitchen of the house, with its washed-board cupboards and table, but the kitchen is placed in a wheat field that rises to the

> back of the stage; scattered among the stalks of wheat are bright red poppies. [7]

In Chapter Two I pointed out how the setting of *The Freedom of the City* (the Mayor's parlor in the Derry Guildhall) functioned as an important Agent of Carnival in the play in that its luxuriousness and material splendour facilitated the "transformation downward" of Lily, Michael and Skinner (a "transformation downward" to the material, bodily level which paradoxically effected a "transformation upward" of their social status through such luxuries as drink, cigars, robes and tiled bathrooms). Equally important to the "transformation downward" of the Irish heritage was the parodic "Irish cottage" set of *The Communication Cord*. Likewise the setting in *Dancing* functions as an Agent of Carnvial--that is, an agent of "transformation downward" and "uncrowning" but in a context here which emphasizes the "dualistic" nature of Carnival as well. The set description here includes a country kitchen with not unusual furnishings, a garden which is described as "not cultivated" and a sycamore tree which is partially obscured from view and the making of two unfinished kites--whose grinning faces we don't see until the end of the play. There is the suggestion of several forces at work here: we are continually made aware of the juxtaposition of the setting of the everyday, the familiar, the usual (the indoors, the kitchen) with the setting of the holiday, the exotic, the extraordinary (the outdoors, the garden). It is from the uppermost branches of the sycamore tree-*heard* but not *seen* by the audience-- that Gerry urges Chris to make love:

> GERRY: (*Off*) Don't stand there. I might fall on top of you.
> CHRIS: Have you any idea what you're doing?
> GERRY: (*Off*) Come on up here to me.
> CHRIS: I'm sure I will.
> GERRY: (*Off*) We never made love on top of a sycamore tree.
> (*She looks quickly around: did her sisters hear that* ?) [8]

Gerry also invites Agnes to taste the pleasures that the sycamore tree (life) has to offer:

> (. . .AGNES *is carrying two small pails of blackberries which she leaves outside the door of the house. Just as she is about to enter the kitchen a voice off calls her* :)
>
> GERRY: (Off) Who is that beautiful woman!
> (*She looks around, puzzled.*)
>
> AGNES: Gerry?
>
> GERRY: Up here, Aggie!
>
> AGNES: Where?
>
> GERRY: On top of the sycamore.
> (*Now she sees him. The audience does not see him.*)
>
> AGNES: Mother of God!
>
> GERRY: Come up and join me!
>
> AGNES: What are you doing up there?
>
> GERRY: You can see into the future from here, Aggie!
>
> AGNES: The tree isn't safe, Gerry. Please come down.
>
> GERRY: Come up and see what's going to happen to you!
>
> AGNES: That branch is dead, Gerry. I'm telling you.
> (*The branch begins to sway.*)
>
> GERRY: Do you think I could get a job in a circus ? Wow-wow-wow-wow!
>
> AGNES: Gerry--!

GERRY: (Sings:) "He flies through the air with the greatest of ease--" Wheeeeeeeeee!
(*She covers her eyes in terror.)*

AGNES: Stop it, Gerry, stop it, stop it!

GERRY: 'That daring young man on the flying trapeze ...'

AGNES: You're going to fall! I'm not looking! I'm not watching!
(*She dashes into the house.*)
That clown of a man is up on top of the sycamore. Go out and tell him to come down, Chrissie.
(*Dancing* 53-54)

It is "outdoors", beyond the confines of the kitchen where Gerry dances with both Chris and Agnes and where the boy Michael engages in the making of the kites with the scary"alien" faces. The garden and the sycamore tree are crucial to the "off-stage" Carnival that we don't see: the copious references to the harvest dance for Lughnasa , the Lough Anna rituals and sacrifices, the Ardstraw dance, the many "off-stage" characters that people both Ballybeg, Ireland and Ryanga, Africa. It is "outdoors" where Agnes and Rose go picking bilberries and where Rose goes off to Lough Anna for her tryst with Danny Bradley. The set, then, possesses a dual function in that it encompasses the everyday Ballybeg that cooks and feeds hens and makes gloves but also the potential Ballybeg of unrealized dreams--of the small artist at work, of sex and longing, of far-off exotic lands replete with the "other" potential, similar and yet not similar to Ireland.

The off-stage roster of characters here are identified or introduced through their "carnivalesque" activities. These characters participate in the "universal" dance of which Lughnasa is a part. In some instances they are emblematic of "culture" or "cultures" which go beyond the parameters of Ballybeg. The characters mentioned in the listing below are notably diverse with respect to nationality, occupation and appearance. They include people from Ireland, Scandinavia and Africa. They consist of a priest, a renegade

married man, a "native" house boy, a gorgeous young woman notable for her beauty and a middle-aged woman who is discriminated against in the work force because of her age. I have italicized the carnivalesque references for each individual character but it must be remembered that collectively all contribute to the notion of diversity within unity which is emblematic of Carnival. Unlike the off-stage participants in *The Freedom of the City* which I named **Derry City**, these characters are culturally diverse, coming as they do out of three countries. Also, the names of the various characters are not as "carnivalesque" as those in *Freedom*.

1. *Danny Bradley*

The married man, described as a "scut" by Chris, with three young children with whom Rosie fancies she is in love. Rose says he calls her his Rosebud. He waited outside the chapel gate last Christmas morning and gave her a *charm* and a *medal* (*giving of gifts*) which she pinned to her jumper. Rose says the medal is made of pure silver and brings good luck, and she wears it all the time beside her miraculous medal. In Act II, Rose quits her bilberry picking with Agnes and goes up to Lough Anna to meet him. She brings a *bottle of milk* and a packet of *chocolate biscuits*, (*eating and drinking*) and he takes her out in his father's blue boat and together they go up through the back hills where he shows her what was left of the Lughnasa fires. "And that's all I'm going to tell you. *(To all)* That's all any of you are going to hear." *(sexual activity ?)* **(*Dancing* 59)**

2. *Austin Morgan*

A chap in the town of Ballybeg who owns Morgan's Arcade where Kate stopped off to buy Michael's spinning-top. According to Rose, Kate dropped in because she has a *"notion"* about him but is wasting her time because he's *"going with a wee young thing from Carrickfad"* **(*Dancing* 10)**. (*sexual desire, activity*) At the beginning of Act II, we hear the church bell ring to signal his wedding (*feast*)to this young girl. At the end of the play we learn from Michael the narrator, that Kate after losing her teaching job ends up tutoring the young family of the owner of the arcade.

3. *Sophie McLaughlin*

According to Kate, a "wee slip of a thing . . . who must be all of fifteen who approaches her in the chemist's shop and says "I hope you're not going to miss the harvest *dance,* Miss Mundy. It's going to be just *supreme* this year" **(*Dancing* 11).**

4. *The Sweeney Boy*

The young boy from Lough Anna whose trousers caught fire in the Festival of Lughnasa bonfire (*celebration, ceremony*) according to Rose, and "went up like a torch" **(*Dancing* 16).** Kate claims that he was anointed the night before and that he is surely dying. Later on in the play we learn that he was *drunk* and toppled into the bonfire. We also learn that he is recovering, that his "legs will be scarred but he'll be all right" **(*Dancing* 59).**

5. *Okawa*

Father Jack's native house boy in Ryanga--"my friend--my mentor--my counsellor"--who summons the people to the African *ceremonies* by striking a huge iron gong **(*Dancing* 47).**

6. *Bernie O'Donnell*

Maggie's old pal from twenty years ago whom Kate runs into at the post office. She is back from London for the first time in twenty years. Kate describes her: "Absolutely gorgeous. The figure of a girl of eighteen. Dressed to kill from head to foot. And the hair!--as black and as curly as the day she left. I can't tell you--a film star!" **(*Dancing* 18).** She is married to a Swede from Stockholm and has her identical fourteen-year-old twins, Nora and Nina, with her on the visit. The twins have inherited their father's blonde hair. She asks about the Mundys by name and asks particularly to be remembered to Maggie, whom she remembers as her youthful cigarette-smoking pal "behind the turf stack". Maggie recalls a *dance* in Ardstraw at the age of sixteen which she and Bernie attended with two young men. Bernie and her partner came third in the dance contest (the Best Military

Two-step), and Maggie felt she (Bernie) and her partner should, by rights, have won.

7. *Curley McDaid*

The boy Bernie O'Donnell and Maggie use to *laugh* about behind the turf stack of their bygone youth. "An eejit of a fella . . .Bald as an egg at seventeen."
(*Dancing* 19)

8. *Brian McGuiness*

Bernie's partner at the *dance* in Ardstraw whom Maggie remembers being *keen on* herself. He had "white hands and the longest eyelashes you ever saw". That night was the last time Maggie saw him. Shortly afterwards she heard he had left for Australia **(*Dancing* 20).**

9. *Tim Carlin*

The young fellow who was pestering Maggie at the time of the Ardstraw dance and, despite the fact that she was keen on Brian McGuinesss was her partner for the *dance.*

10. *Karl Sharpeggi*

A German priest that Father Jack knew in Africa who took so much quinine that he became an addict and almost died. He was rushed to the hospital in Kampala, but because they could do nothing for him Jack and Okawa brought him to the *local medicine man,* and "Karl Sharpeggi lived until he was eighty-eight"!
(*Dancing* 39)

11. *Vera McLaughlin*

The mother of the afore-mentioned Sophie of the upcoming harvest dance. She is referred to in the play as the "knitting agent", the supplier who

buys the hand-made gloves knitted by Agnes and Rose. In Act II Chris informs us that she ran into her in town and Vera is no longer buying any more hand-made gloves as there's a new factory started up in Donegal Town where machine gloves are made more quickly and more economically. The people Vera used to supply buy their gloves direct from the factory now. Most of the people who used to work at home have signed on, and buses have been organized to bring the workers to the factory and back every day. Vera tried to get a job there herself, but they told her she was too old at forty-one, and she was so distressed at this, according to Chris, that she could hardly speak. In the last speech of the play, Michael tells us that Vera came to the Mundy home to explain to Rose and Agnes why she could not buy their gloves any more. She advised them to apply immediately to the new factory for work. (*Money and Death*).

f. <u>The Property: Marconi</u>:

> Into this landscape of disappointment, exotic music insinuates itself. The radio has a nickname. The jokey sister, Maggie, suggests calling the radio Lugh, in honor of the Celtic god of the harvest (for whose festival the play is named), but the prim schoolteacher and head of the household, Kate, won't hear of it. So they just call it Marconi "because that was the name of the set." Says Friel, speaking of the "Marconi voodoo" that sends the sisters careening around the kitchen and includes Cole Porter: "I think what's interesting is that it's music from a different culture that liberates them. They haven't absorbed it into their life and into their culture and tamed it. It's still slightly exotic". **(*Lahr* 178)**

The radio, Marconi, functions in *Dancing* not only as an agent of Carnival but almost as an actual character in the play. For one thing, "he" (there is the implicit suggestion that the radio is a "he") has a name. When Marconi misbehaves he gets slapped and cursed at as if he were a person.

Marconi is the chief catalyst in the music /dance action of the play. It is to Marconi's music that the sisters dance their wild Irish jig in Act 1, and he also supplies the "Dancing in the Dark" for the Gerry-Chris dance and the "Anything Goes " for the Gerry-Agnes dance. He is the harbinger of the "second life" to repressive Ballybeg in much the same manner that Private Gar functioned in *Philadelphia Here I Come!* and Skinner in *The Freedom of the City* . Marconi is a rogue; he has a mind of his own. Sometimes he works and sometimes he doesn't, "praising and abusing" in the Carnival tradition quite relentlessly, and there is no explaining his mercurial behaviour:

> *("Dancing in the Dark"softly from the radio.)*
> MAGGIE: Good for you, Aggie. What did you do to it ?
>
> AGNES: I didn't touch it.
>
> . . . . . .
> *(They dance off. After they have exited the music continues for a few seconds and then stops suddenly in mid-phrase. MAGGIE goes to the set, slaps it, turns it off. KATE moves away from the window.*) **(*Dancing* 32-34)**

It is significant that Marconi is mentioned along with Father Jack and Gerry Evans in Michael's opening monologue as one of the three catalysts of change to Ballybeg in the summer of 1936. Like Father Jack, the defrocked priest who can't remember the right words for anything, and Gerry Evans, the dancer, the teacher of ballroom dancing and the seller of gramaphones who tells Chrissie while dancing with her that he never knows the words to any song but it doesn't matter because "This is more important" **(*Dancing* 33),** Marconi communicates through the preverbal medium of music. More significantly, like his fellow male Agents of Carnival, he is not Irish. He has an Italian name and he broadcasts not only Irish music, but also American music. Gerry Evans claims Wales for his home but speaks with a British accent. Father Jack speaks with "Scarcely any trace of an Irish accent", and the action of the play finds him totally out of touch with the Irish culture, language and climate. He cannot "come home" again. Marconi, like the wearers of the

tricorn and the dazzling white army uniform, is an outsider, and it is his special province to exert an outside, holiday, upside-down, liberating influence on staid Ballybeg.

g. Costumes

Dress

> Kate, the teacher, is the only wage-earner. Agnes and Rose make a little money knitting gloves at home. Chris and Maggie have no income. So the clothes of all the sisters reflect their lean circumstances. Rose wears wellingtons even though the day is warm. Maggie wears large boots with long, untied laces. Rose, Maggie and Agnes all wear the drab, wrap-around overalls/aprons of the time.
>
> In the opening tableau Father Jack is wearing the uniform of a British army chaplain--a magnificent and immaculate uniform of dazzling white; gold epaulettes and gold buttons, tropical hat, clerical collar, military cane. He stands stiffly to attention. As the text says he is "resplendent", "magnificent'. So resplendent that he looks almost comic opera.
>
> In this tableau, Gerry is wearing a spotless white tricorn hat with splendid white plumage. (Soiled and shabby versions of Jack's uniform and Gerry's ceremonial hat are worn at the end of the play, i.e., in the final tableau.)

The playwright's explicit stage directions illustrate the "double" imagery of Carnival. We have the "carnivalesque" juxtaposition of the "realistic" everyday, ordinary clothing of the five Mundy sisters and the "theatrical" splendid costumes of Father Jack and Gerry. Implicit in the initial brief description is the ultimate "uncrowning" and "transformation downward" of Father Jack's and Gerry's outfits. The playwright informs us that the costumes will eventually devolve into a parodic travesty of their former likenesses. Father Jack and Gerry are not the only ones "in disguise". As the action of the play unfolds, the drab clothing of the Mundy sisters functions as a masquerade for the primitive drives and passions of five healthy, life-

loving, vital women, who appear to be psychologically and sexually repressed, but who are "unmasked" of these seeming "realities" and revealed to possess a formidable potential for the "second" life Ballybeg will not permit them.

h. Carnivalesque Discourse (Verbal "Play") :

> GERRY: You'd never guess what I met on the road out from the town. Talk about good luck! A cow with a single horn coming straight out of the middle of its forehead.
>
> CHRIS: You never did!
>
> GERRY: As God is my judge. Walking along by itself. Nobody near it.
>
> CHRIS: Gerry--
>
> GERRY: And just as I was passing it, it stopped and looked me straight in the eye.
>
> CHRIS: That was no cow you met--that was a unicorn.
>
> GERRY: Go ahead and mock. A unicorn has the body of a horse. This was a cow--a perfectly ordinary brown cow except that it had a single horn just here. Would I tell you a lie?
> (CHRIS *laughs*)
>
> Go ahead. Laugh. But that's what I saw. Wasn't that a spot of good luck?
>
> CHRIS: Was it?

GERRY: A cow with a single horn? Oh, yes that must be a good omen. How many cows like that have you ever met?

CHRIS: Thousands. Millions.

GERRY: Stop that! I'm sure it's the only one in Ireland; maybe the only one in the world. And I met it on the road to Ballybeg. And it winked at me.

CHRIS: You never mentioned that.

GERRY: What?

CHRIS: That it winked at you.

GERRY: Unbelievable. That's what made it all so mysterious. Oh, yes, that must be a fabulous omen. Maybe this week I'm going to sell a gramaphone or two after all.

CHRIS: But I thought you--?

GERRY: Look! A single magpie! That's definitely a bad omen--one for sorrow. (*His stick as a gun*) Bang! Missed. (*Mock serious*) Where's my lucky cow? Come back, brown cow, come back!
(*They both laugh.*) **(*Dancing* 30-31)**

I have cited the carnivalesque discourse of the two Gars as the most prominent dramaturgical feature of *Philadelphia!* and as one carnivalesque feature in the verbal/visual *The Freedom of the City* and *The Communication Cord*. The same carnivalesque discourse is featured in *Dancing At Lughnasa*, but it is not so highly developed or as baroque as that of *Philadelphia!* and it is dispersed among different sets of characters--Gerry and Chrissie, Maggie and the child, etc. It does not feature the elaborate word-play, the role-playing and the various accents of the two Gars but concentrates rather on whimsy, fancy, jokes and puns. Nor does it feature the different types of "speech" I made note of in *The Communication Cord*. It

represents a step backward for the playwright in verbal pyrotechnics--the better to make room ultimately for the more prominent visual effects:

> Whenever an Irish dramatist writes a great play or even a not-so-great one, habit demands that non-Irish audiences fall all over themselves praising the writer's poetic command of the English language. Those audiences may be in for a shock at "Dancing at Lughnasa", Brian Friel's new play at the Plymouth Theater, for its overwhelming power has almost nothing to do with words. [9]

I think this is only partially correct. The "verbal" play " emerges here as *part* of the carnivalesque dramaturgical whole. Although it celebrates language for its own sake and contributes to the celebratory theme and festive structure of the play, it is not the play's *most* celebrated feature. But it is still an indisputable, remarkable feature. I have selected the above passage as the play's best example of a merry, charming, witty verbal exchange, a piece of fancy and folly which owes its very entity to the "dance" of language. The frothy, playful nature of the passage also acts as a metaphor for the sexual attraction between Gerry and Chrissie. They express their love and desire for one another here without ever using these words or even alluding to romance. John Simon in *New York Magazine* expresses the delicate relationship between words and language Friel has achieved in this play:

> The interaction, I repeat, is exquisite in this tremulous play, which wouldn't be Friel, wouldn't be Irish, if it were not poetic, eloquent, flowingly verbal even in its condemnation of words as troublers of stillness, and sad-funny when not funny-sad. [10]

We have previously seen the "dance" of structure with respect to the play's presentational/representational structure and the dialectical, two-in one forces present in the role of the narrator, the time frame, setting, properties and costumes. It is time to consider dance itself.

The Dance/Music in *Dancing*

> In the course of the play, the women will perform everything from a furious jig on the kitchen table to a wide-screen Hollywood waltz in the garden. Uncle Jack (Donal Donnelly), a touch of malaria still befuddling his mind, will stomp out the tribal rhythms he learned from the lepers as a Roman Catholic priest in Uganda. But Mr. Friel is dancing too. Sometimes he reels his characters in, so he's swaying with them lovingly, cheek-to cheek. Sometimes he twirls them away from his side, as if to send them spinning out into the world. At the last minute, however, he invariably catches them by the hand and gratefully pulls them back--partners in memory. [11]

In Chapter One I spoke of the particular way in which the Irish appropriated the diverse, multifaceted theatre of the Symbolist movement at the end of the nineteenth century and attempted to integrate dance, poetry and music in one drama. With specific reference to Brian Friel we have seen both with *Philadephia Here I Come!* and *The Freedom of the City* (and these are only two examples I have selected among many possible others) how the playwright himself in his previous work has made copious use of dance and music as part of a carnivalesque dramaturgy in otherwise" literary" plays. *The Communication Cord* I focused on because it is remarkable for gesture and *Fathers and Sons*, for its combination of gesture and music. Because of the size of this thesis, I have selected for detailed examination the five major dance sequences of the play with respect to the specific context of Carnival they appear to occupy and how this context may be dramaturgically significant. Four are actual dance performances; the last is a speech about dance, *the* speech about dance which contains the kernal of the play's theme. The five sequences are all different stylistically with respect to participants, audience, accompaniment and type of dance, demonstrating the same multifaceted approach I have previously noted with respect to the play's time

frame, settings, costumes and overall dramaturgical structure. I have quoted the entire dance sequence, or part of it, or I have made use of critical commentary on that particular dance. My choices have been dictated by the intention to investigate the specific implication(s) of each sequence using the most explicit and cogent material available.

"The Mason's Apron": Disguise, Parodic Travesty and Carnival Laughter:

> The most extraordinary scene of the London stage is triggered when Michael's mother, Chrissie, switches on the radio. Maggie, standing with her hands in a bowl of flour, is first to respond to the heavy beat of the ceili band. Absorbing the rhythm, she drags her fingers down her cheeks and breasts, streaking her face like a savage. With a wild cry she starts to dance, arms, legs and bootlaces flying. One by one the sisters follow suit, each one a maenad deranged by the atavistic spirit of the music, all moving in ways that caricature them--like the crude jig danced by Rose, a simpleton, whose Wellington boots "pound out her own erratic rhythm." The circumspect Kate is the last to join in, and her tight-lipped autistic reel is the most strangely driven of all. When the music ends midphrase, the sisters stop as if snapped out of hypnosis, half embasrassed and half defiant. A few members of the audience titter awkwardly, unsure of how to respond. but from that moment on, Friel has both actors and spectators in his thrall **(Kavanagh130).**

The playwright himself, in the stage directions which comprise the dance, explicitly reveals the significance of this dance in the context of Carnival: namely that a sense of order is being consciously subverted. This dance passage involves a number of Carnival elements which accomplish this subversion. Maggie is the sister who initiates the dance and in so doing she deliberately assumes a *mask*--albeit one made with the flour with which she streaks her face. Related to the mask is the idea of *disguise*, which

paradoxically involves the revelation of the "true" self. As Bakhtin points out:

> The mask is connected with the joy of change and reincarnation, with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity; it rejects conformity to oneself. The mask is related to transition, metamorphoses, the violation of natural boundaries, to mockery and familiar nicknames. It contains the playful element of life; it is based on a peculiar interrelation of reality and image, characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles. Of course it would be impossible to exhaust the intricate multiform symbolism of the mask. Let us point out that such manifestations as parodies, caricatures, grimaces, eccentric postures, and comic gestures are per se derived from the mask. It reveals the essence of the grotesque. **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 40)**

The sisters are "transformed downwards"and the radio Marconi, the priest's surplice which Christina assumes as a costume, and the flour mask are all agents of this "transformation downward". They are therefore literally changed in their appearance, assuming "disguises" which utterly reveal who they truly are: vibrant, fun-loving, even animalistic women with inordinate capacities for revelry and passion. The "order" of their daily lives is "uncrowned" as is the authority of the Catholic Church associated with the priest's surplice. This image in particular illustrates the Church's paradoxical relationship to this phenomenon. The priest's surplice may be said to "uncrown" or "abuse" the authority of the Church in this bacchnalian dance. At the same time this icon of official Catholicism, on a "degraded" material level, simultaneously acts as a Carnival agent of the sisters' liberation.

In the stage directions the reel is referred to as "parodic". What exactly is being parodied, travestied? In *Rabelais and his World* Bakhtin distinguishes between the official and the non-official feast. He insists that the official feasts of the Middle Ages, whether ecclesiastic, feudal or sponsored by the state, confirmed the existing pattern of things as they were and did not encourage the people in the recognition of the "second" life. He perceives the

official feast as a betrayer of the true, festive character. It is possible to regard the sisters' dance as a counter-festivity in relationship to the "official" harvest dance and other regularly celebrated rites that commemorated La Lughnasa. It is possible to regard the dance as a parody, a travesty of *the* dance--the one everyone is preparing for, dressing up for, looking forward to, discussing endlessly. The harvest dance, it would seem, is for all of Ballybeg, but the Mundy sisters are ambivalent about how "right" their attendance would be. Are they too old? Do they have the right clothes? The Mundy sisters do not get to the coveted harvest dance, but the harvest dance, parodied, travestied,"upside down" complete with priest's surplice, boots without laces and floury mask, comes to them via their good friend Marconi. The harvest dance originally provokes interest, longing, excitement and fear of embarassment on the part of all the sisters, possibly because they envision it as out of their reach, as not within the realm of their possibilities, an alien and foreign entity. But the close contact of the dance they create themselves annihilates their fear, dispelling any rigid notions about propriety. The five sisters function as Agents of Carnival on their own behalf. Their own passionate involvement invokes enjoyment and finally, ecstacy. This "transformation downward" evokes a corresponding rise in status. The sisters are empowered in the expression of their "real" selves. The sisters victoriously embrace the "other" or "second" life within themselves which they have previously so feared . And paradoxically they embrace their fear through revelry and *fun*. This dance is both subversive and a restorer of harmony:

> Laughter has the remarkable power of making an object come up close, of drawing it into a zone of crude contact where one can finger it familiarly on all sides, turn it upside down, inside out, peer at it from above and below, break open its external shell, look into its center, doubt it, take it apart, dismember it, lay it bare and expose it, examine it freely and experiment with it. Laughter demolishes fear and piety before an object, before a world, making it an object of familiar contact and thus clearing the ground for an absolutely free investigation of it. Laughter is a vital factor in laying down that prerequisite for fearlessness

> without which it would be impossible to approach the world realistically **(Bakhtin,*Dialogic* 23).**

Carnival and the Audience:

It would appear that the implications for transformation and identity go beyond the sisters themselves, however, and from the point of view of performance are aimed at the audience as well. With respect to the performer-audience relationship in this particular dance sequence, this Irish jig has a collective aspect not present in the "Gerry" or "Father Jack" sequences that follow. It is performed by all five persons present on stage at that time, unlike the following sequences. Thus, the theatre audience is the only audience. The dance is indicated almost entirely in the stage directions and does not emerge out of, or co-exist with, dialogue the way the sequences in Act II do. We have the audience coming face to face here with the possiblities of the "second" life within themselves. The sisters' dance is the first "big" dance of the play and sets the stage, so to speak, for more to come. It functions, coming as it does fairly early on in the first act, as a kind of signal--that this taste of freedom and lack of inhibition and celebration will surely be followed with more of the same and that if it is possible for the inhabitants of repressive Ballybeg, it is possible for everyone. There is an animal-like quality, a lack of conscious form or choreography or control in this dance sequence, a vitality, an aggression that is also absent from those subsequent to it. It is a heady, viscereal, dramaturgical invitation to a response from the spectators, and this invitation, following in the style of *The Communication Cord* and *Fathers and Sons*, is issued visually/musically and not verbally. It gives permission to the spectators to regress and reacquaint themselves with the preverbal arena of bodies, sweat, movement, sound and laughter which is its essence rather than words. It is a powerful theatrical device and significant for the play that Friel invokes it not as the climax of the play but as the initiator to the play. In a style much more fully developed than in the previous plays mentioned, it represents the supreme example of the triumph of the gesture over the word:

> What does the dancing mean? It is not our business to know exactly, for as Michael later says,

dancing is a language "to whisper private and sacred things" - the expression of a search for an "otherness", a passion that might be spiritual or romantic or uncategorizable but that in any case is an antidote to the harsh facts of an earthbound existance. It is typical of the production's delicacy that in the first, tumultuous dance, each sister's gestures, steps and whoops have been precisely choreographed to raise the curtain, however briefly, on the individual passions of five contrasting private souls. It is typical of the play's own pagan force that that seems to yank the audience into communion with its own most private and sacred things, at a pre-intellectual gut level that leaves us full of personal feelings to which words can not be readily assigned **(Rich 25 October 1991).**

"Dancing in the Dark" and "Anything Goes": The King of Misrule, Praise/Abuse and Carnivalesque Death:

"Dancing in the Dark ", softly from the radio.) ...

GERRY: Good tune.
(*Suddenly he takes her in his arms and dances.*)...

GERRY: Do you know the words?

CHRIS: I never know any words.

GERRY: Neither do I. Doesn't matter. This is more important. (*Pause.*) Marry me, Chrissie.
(*Pause.*) Are you listening to me ?

CHRIS: I hear you.

GERRY: Will you marry me when I came back in two weeks ?

CHRIS: I don't think so, Gerry.

GERRY: I'm mad about you. You know I am. I've always been mad about you.

CHRIS: When you're with me.

GERRY: Leave this house and come away with--

CHRIS: But you'd walk out on me again. You wouldn't intend to but that's what would happen because that's your nature and you can't help yourself.

GERRY: Not this time, Chrissie. This time it will be--

CHRIS: Don't talk any more; no more words. Just dance me down the lane and then you'll leave.

GERRY: Believe me, Chrissie; this time the omens are terrific! The omens are unbelievable this time! (*They dance off. After they have exited the music continues for a few seconds and then stops suddenly in mid-phrase. . . . .*) **(*Dancing* 33-34)**

. . .

GERRY: ... Dance with me, Agnes.

AGNES: Have a bit of sense, Gerry Evans.

GERRY: Dance with me. Please. Come on.

MAGGIE: Dance with him, Aggie.

GERRY: (*Sings* :) "In olden times a glimpse of stocking was looked on as something shocking--
"Give me your hand.

MAGGIE: Go on, Aggie.

AGNES: Who wants to dance at this time of--
(GERRY *pulls her to her feet and takes her in his arms.*)

GERRY: (*Sings*) '. . . anything goes.
Good authors, too who once knew better words
Now only use four-letter words
Writing prose,
Anything goes . . . "

(Bring up the sound. With style and easy elegance they dance once around the kitchen and then out to the garden--GERRY singing the words directly to her face:)

"If driving fast cars you like,
If low bars you like,
If old hymns you like,
If bare limbs you like,
If Mae West you like,
Or me undressed you like,
Why, nobody will oppose.
When ev'ry night the set that's smart is
intruding in nudist parties in Studios,
Anything goes . . . "

(They are now in the far corner of the garden.)

You're a great dancer, Aggie.

AGNES: No, I'm not.

GERRY: You're a superb dancer.

AGNES: No, I'm not.

GERRY: You should be a professional dancer.

AGNES: Too late for that.

GERRY: You could teach dancing in Ballybeg!

AGNES: That's all they need.

GERRY: Maybe it is!

(He bends down and kisses her on the forehead. All this is seen--but not heard--by CHRIS at the kitchen window. Immediately after this kiss GERRY bursts into song again, turns AGNES four or five times very rapidly and dances her back to the kitchen.)

There you are. Safe and sound **(*Dancing* 64-65).**

Gerry Evans is the male partner in both the male-female dance sequences of the play. Gerry dances and sings, makes jokes, flirts, makes promises he will never keep, promises gifts which he will never bring, attests to love he has no intention of ever honouring and invites not one but two ladies to share the pleasures of the sycamore tree with him. He is a seller of Minerva gramaphones, a teacher of ballroom dancing and a fixer of the wireless. He is the father of Chris's illegitimate child and a future soldier. He has come before and he may come again--but never to stay. He "praises" with kisses and compliments but implicit in these is his ultimate abandonment of his "victims". He functions as an icon of laughter, good times and desire--the living, breathing Carnival embodiment of what the Mundy sisters long for but do not possesss in their everyday lives. Hence his presence in the play is relegated to two brief visits in the summer of 1936. Gerry functions as a double Agent of Carnival. He both "crowns" and "uncrowns" as we have seen above, but this ritual is also applied to himself. Gerry Evans functions as the King of Misrule in the Mundy household. His presence acts as a catalyst to the conversation and imaginations not only of Chris and Agnes, both of whom are in love with him, but also of Kate, Maggie and Rose who are variously repelled, amused and entranced by him The dance sequences with Chrissie and Agnes and Maggie (briefly) elect or crown him as the King of Misrule. At the same time he is mocked by Kate and Rose. But implicit in this election with its crowning (praise) is the King's uncrowning (abuse) which will come at the end of the play.

When we first meet Gerry in the play he is disguised as a king , wearing a "spotless white tricorn hat with splendid white plumage" (*Dress*). But concurrent with this we are told that "Soiled and shabby versions of Jack's uniform and Gerry's ceremonial hat are worn at the end of the play, i.e. in the final tableau". Once Gerry's reign comes to an end his costume changes and becomes a travesty of its former self. Gerry will go off to fight the war in Spain, but it will not end before Christmas as he has promised but only serve as a precursor of more bloodshed to come in 1939. He will be "thrashed" or "abused" by the terrible war he gallantly sets out to fight in, and the "thrashing" will leave some permanent scars. Gerry's limp becomes a travesty of his former dancing days. The final abuse is death--death firstly of the former youthful self and, finally, of death itself.

> My father sailed for Spain that Saturday. The last I saw of him was dancing down the lane in imitation of Fred Astaire, swinging his walking stick, Uncle Jack's ceremonial tricorn at a jaunty angle over his left eye. When he got to the main road he stopped and turned and with both hands blew a dozen theatrical kisses back to Mother and me.
>
> He was wounded in Barcelona--he fell off his motor-bike--so that for the rest of his life he walked with a limp. The limp wasn't disabling but it put an end to his dancing days; and that really distressed him. Even the role of maimed veteran, which he loved, could never compensate for that.
>
> He still visited us occasionally, perhaps once a year. Each time he was on the brink of a new career. And each time he proposed to Mother and promised me a new bike. Then the war came in 1939; his visits became more infrequent; and finally he stopped coming altogether **(*Dancing* 61).**

The idea of *death* is central to the crowning/uncrowning, praise/abuse motif - and is not only implicit but intrinsic to all of the carnivalesque activity within the time frame of the play:

> And another, albeit unseen, presence: the date itself, 1936, a kind of summer festival in the history of Europe--a garden party or thé dansant on the way to disaster **(Simon 120).**

I have spoken before of the Carnival images of transformation and renewal and the idea of death forms a large part of these concepts--not as a finality in and of itself but as part of a total unending cycle. Death is present in more than one form, literally and metaphorically throughout the play. Rose's pet rooster dies. Marconi experiences several little " deaths" and "resurrections" throughout the course of the play. Rose and Agnes lose their jobs as makers of gloves. Kate does not get to marry Austin Morgan of the Arcade whom she fancies: he marries someone else and she loses her teaching job and ends up tutoring Morgan's children. Father Jack will die within the year. The

Second World War looms large on the horizon. The crowning/uncrowning, praise/abuse motif is particularly at work in Gerry's dance sequence with Agnes. "Anything Goes" is notable for its dramatic irony, for we already know from Michael's prior monologue that Agnes and her sister Rose will leave home and end up as as destitute alcoholics who will die in a foreign country. In this way the playwright makes us aware of the "uncrowning" and "abuse" even as we are enthralled with the "crowning" and the "praise". The passage is both romantic and cruel at the same time and the audience is aware of impending death even as it watches life whirling around the stage:

> One of these episodes offers a particularly poignant moment in the play. Looking ahead, the narrator lets us know what dreary, destitute lives Agnes and Rose will live after the events of the play. Knowing this , we watch Agnes dance with Gerry: She is a good dancer, and her eyes as well as her body tell us how full of joy she is while dancing. With our foreknowledge, however, we realize that this is the last happy moment she will have in her life. **(Wilson 25 October 1991)**

Bakhtin, however, maintains that death is inseparable from laughter in the carnivalesque view, that it is viewed as a part of the whole which (as we see in the play), includes dancing, singing, music, eating, drinking, sex, etc. He differentiates between the "cheerful death" of Rabelais which "not only coincides with a high value placed on life and with a responsibility to fight to the end for this life but it is in itself an expression of this high evaluation, an expression of the life force that eternally triumphs over any death" **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 198)** as opposed to the death of the Romantics and the Symbolists which "ceases to be an aspect of life itself and becomes again a phenomenon on the border between my life here and now and a potential other kind of life. The whole problematic is concentrated within the limits of the *individual* and *sealed-off* progression of a single life"**(Bakhtin,*Dialogic* 200).** Thus death, the "final" abuse, can become the seed for new praise. There is some interesting very recent evidence to justify the Rabelaisian attitude towards death as typically rather than untypically Irish, and the information

makes a point of identifying this point of view most particularly with the Northern Ireland sensibility:

> First, it must be understood that the Irish have a peculiar fascination with death, and for the Northern Irish, the fascination borders on obsession. In most North American newspapers, the obituaries are buried in the back pages. In the *Irish News*, Belfast's Catholic daily, they are on page 2, and they include not only the entries for those who have died in the previous few days, but also memorial notices and short poems for those who passed away years ago. Some of those notices are addressed to the dead person directly, seeming to betray a belief that the deceased is still a subscriber. At the same time, there is something unthreatening about death. Milltown Cemetery is the only graveyard I have ever been to where I have seen vendors selling cotton candy and ice cream at the front gate.[12]

Dramaturgically both dance/music sequences follow in the tradition of *Fathers and Sons* in that gesture (dance) and music function as the text to signify the sexual passion which exists between Gerry and Chris and the unresolved longing between Gerry and Agnes. Gerry makes love to Chrissie when he dances with her. He sings to Agnes of an attraction of which both are perfectly aware but which has never been spoken between them. The Gerry dance sequences (with Chrissie, then Agnes) fulfill the same function as the" brown cow" sequence between Gerry and Chrissie. The "brown cow" text is the veneer for the subtextual romance and attraction between the two. Dance here, rather than restrictive dialogue, is the metaphor for the underlying dynamics (sexual attraction, romance) between or among these characters:

> The frustated sexual affection between the young mother Chris and the ne'er -do-well Gerry is dramatized not in the dialogue of their tongue-tied reunion so much as in their Fred-and-Ginger spin to the radio's outpouring of "Dancing in the Dark", a song whose lyrics pointedly elude them. The

> unacknowleged longings of Uncle Jack, who seems to have left his heart back in Africa and has trouble retrieving his English vocabulary after 25 years of Swahili, can be articulated only when he walks toward the wheatfields beyond the Mundy garden and taps two sticks together in time with some Dionysian tribal rhythm banging about in his head. Almost as poignant are the faces of those characters who cannot hear the music or join in a cane: when the four other sisters watch Chris and Gerry two-step from afar, each of their expressions becomes a distictive, haunting portrait in complex suppressed emotions **(Rich 25 October 1991).**

Carnival and the Audience :

Gerry is equally the seducer of the audience, who want to believe his fantastic, charming lies which proffer an exciting theatrical alternative to the realism of civilian life. There is a well-documented, literary precedent for the carnivalesque role which Gerry Evans assumes in this play, and Bakhtin gives to this tradition (which he associates primarily with the novel) the name *gay deception*. The rogue, the fool, the clown, the picaresque hero indulges in a gay and intelligent deception, "a lie justified because directed to liars" **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 404).** Gerry is explicitly referred to as a "clown" by Agnes when he is up in the sycamore tree. The liars are, of course, the Voices of Authority--the priests, monks, scholars, wealthy men, whose "truth" consists of sustaining the repressive, life-denying status quo:

> The rogue, the clown and the fool create around themselves their own special little world, their own chronotope. . . . These figures carry with them into literature first a vital connection with the theatrical trappings of the public square where the common people congregate; second--and this is of course a related phenomenon--the very being of these figures does not have a direct, but rather a metaphorical significance. Their very appearance, everything they do and say, cannot be understood in a direct and unmediated way but must be grasped metaphorically. Sometimes their

> significance can be reversed--but one cannot take them literally, because they are not what they seem. Third and last, and this again follows from what has come before, their existence is a reflection of some other's mode of being--and even then, not a direct reflection. They are life's maskers, their being coincides with their role, and outside this role they simply do not exist.
> **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 159)**

Bakhtin emphasizes the right of these figures to be "other" in this world, the right which allows them to transcend the usual categories which most people habituate. The connection to the "square" is what marks them as "public" rather than "private" and it is this social, communal as opposed to private, aspect of life which liberates the Mundy sisters (if only temporarily) in the form of dance and music. Equally it is the connection of these figures to the "square", "the other", which connects them to the audience. The audience is the "square"--the people. Gerry represents the performing aspect of the spectators watching. He is our emissary into the "second" life. He does what we dare , in fact, not do--but yearn to do, desire to do, dream to do.

"Dancing in the Dark" and "Anything Goes" sequences, unlike "The Mason's Apron" are performed, not in the kitchen as is the first dance, but in the garden to a double audience--the other Mundy sisters and the theatre audience. The audience is here confronted with a mirror image of its spectator self. Again, Marconi functions as a primary Agent of Carnival, but this time with the popular, well-known music of the American, Cole Porter. "Dancing in the Dark" emerges out of actual dialogue, although neither Gerry or Chris can remember the words to the song. The second dance, "Anything Goes," unlike the Irish jig or "Dancing in the Dark" has Gerry singing the actual words. Both dances feature sexual attraction, romance and charm in juxtaposition to the vitality and aggression of the sisters' dance. The sexuality of these passage is enhanced in a different way because they feature a man and a woman. If "The Mason's Apron" served as the initiator into the play these two passages, especially "Anything Goes" in Act Two, act as the dance climaxes of the play. With respect to theatrical form, they "uncrown" the opening "Mason's Apron" in that we are presented here with an entirely different theatre-- different in composition, setting and context.

This "uncrowning" on a theatrical level is a visual metaphor for the thematic "uncrowning" of Irish culture by American culture or the *specific* parameters of any culture, for that matter, even as it "crowns" the notion of culture itself. The dance sequences of the entire play in the complexity, diversity and multiplicity of their composition and style mirror the carnivalesque structure of the play--the monologues/scenes, the fluid time sequence, the "dualistic" setting and the "disguising" costumes.

The African Dance and the Ryangan Leper Speech: Father Jack "the Irish Outcast", and the Rule of Misrule:

> *(At this point in* MICHAEL'S *speech* JACK *picks up two pieces of wood, portions of the kites, and strikes them together. The sound they make pleases him. He does it again--and again--and again. Now he begins to beat out a structured beat whose rhythm gives him pleasure. And as* MICHAEL *continues his speech,* JACK *begins to shuffle --dance in time to his tatoo--his body slightly bent over, his eyes on the ground, his feet moving rhythmically. And as he dance-shuffles, he mutters--sings--makes occasional sounds that are incomprehensible and almost inaudible.* KATE *comes out to the garden and stands still, watching him.* ROSE *enters. Now* ROSE *and* MAGGIE *and* AGNES *are all watching him--some at the front door, some through the window. Only* CHRIS *has her eyes closed, her face raised, her mouth slightly open; remembering. . .)* **(*Dancing* 41-42)**

This dance is dramaturgically juxtaposed with Michael's curtain monologue at the end of Act 1, which foretells of a future replete with "deaths" of various kinds --Rose and Agnes will leave, Gerry will go off to fight in the International Brigade. It is a future connected intrinsically with other places and other times, and Michael also makes mention of "another dance" between Gerry and Chrissie , but this time he tells us the dance will be "without music; just there, in ritual circles round and round that square and then down the lane and back up again; slowly, formally, with easy deliberation" **(*Dancing* 42).** Father Jack dances for us the dance without

music, without words, the dance that connects him with another time and another place in his own life. Throughout the course of the play we see him repeatedly forget words or their meanings and we see him "mix up" the sisters in terms of identification. We hear him speak of his discomfort with the cold Irish climate and equally of how much he misses his life in Africa, particularly his friendship with Okawa, his house boy. In this lone dance he "remembers" what was, for him, life. This dance sequence does not have the dramatic impact or the animal energy of the sisters' big step dance nor does it possess the charm and lightness and romance, nor the sexual overtones of the Gerry/Chrissie, Gerry/Agnes sequences. It is stark and unadorned and for this reason stands out in its very simplicity. The ritualistic nature of the dance is its most significant aspect, and the soundlessness with which it is performed only makes the visual aspect more apparent. This dance more than any of the others articulates the theme of the play--the universality of gesture, the power of movement/gesture over words. Dramaturgically the audience is not intended to be "swept away" by it in the way they are by the other headier sequences, where there is more scope for personal, emotional identification. Rather, they are intended to sit back and observe the point the playwright is trying to make. This dance is more foreign and less familiar. One way of looking at the context of Carnival inherent in this dance sequence, coming as it does at the end of Act 1, is to see it as a dramaturgical "transformation downward" of the previously more theatrical dance passages, the sisters'wild jig and the Gerry/Chris sequence ,we have witnessed. Father Jack more than any other character in the play is the speaker for the playwright regarding the "theme" of the play. The sisters' audience, as in the former "Gerry" dance sequence, mirrors the actual audience in the theatre--but this time the performance does not occasion discussion among them or involvement, but only rapt attention. This of all the dances in the play reflects most accurately the essence of ceremony, connects most explicitly two seemingly disparate cultures, Irish and African. Father Jack is the unconscious liaison between these two entities.

> In making a show of the ceremonial aspects of life, Friel points out how men honor the religious instinct in different ways. Uncle Jack gropes for a word to describe the merging of the secular and sacred in African tribal life and comes up with

> "ceremony". The ceremonial generates community--not division. And as the sectarian violence in Northern Ireland has long borne witness, sin is separation. Dancing expresses the will to integrate with life, not separate from it. **(Lahr 176)**

The play makes clear that Father Jack's Roman Catholic superiors have recalled him home because the priest after many years in Africa fails to distinguish between the Roman Catholic Mass and the native African rituals. His speeches on life, death, God, dance reveal that his beliefs have undergone a powerful "transformation downward" in the course of his African sojourn. He is no longer Catholic or Irish in either his temperament or in his beliefs. He still believes in the concept of a God, of community , of love, of life after death, but his beliefs are no longer confined within the specific parameters of Roman Catholic theology. But Friel is quick to point out that the counter-festivity not only "uncrowns" and "transforms downwards" but also renews; that both expressions--Irish and African, Catholic and "pagan"--reflect one integrated whole, one unity. He does not juxtapose the Christian and "pagan" view but rather *makes no distinction between them.* We *see* the theme of the play demonstrated in the dance sequences but we *hear* the theme of the play when Father Jack speaks passionately and tenderly about the beloved Africa he has left behind. The following excerpt is the most fully articulated example:

> JACK: . . . Did you hear that wedding bell this morning, Kate?
>
> KATE: Yes.
>
> JACK: Well, Okawa's gong would carry four times as far as that. But if it's one of the bigger ceremonies, he'll spend a whole day going round all the neighbouring villages, blowing on this enormous flute he made himself.
>
> MAGGIE: And they all meet in your church?

JACK: When I had a church. Now we gather in the common in the middle of the village. If it's an important ceremony, you would have up to three or four hundred people.

KATE: All gathered together for Mass?

JACK: Maybe. Or maybe to offer sacrifice to Obi, our Great Goddess of the Earth, so that the crops will flourish. Or maybe to get in touch with our departed fathers for their advice and wisdom. Or maybe to thank the spirits of our tribe if they have been good to us; or to appease them if they're angry. I complain to Okawa that our calendar of ceremonies gets fuller every year. Now at this time of year over there--at the Ugandan harvest time--we have two very wonderful ceremonies: the Festival of the New Yam and the Festival of the Sweet Casava; and they're both dedicated to our Great Goddess, Obi--

KATE: But these aren't Christian ceremonies, Jack, are they?

JACK: Oh, no. the Ryangans have always been faithful to their own beliefs--like these two Festivals I'm telling you about; and they are very special, really magnificent ceremonies. I haven't described those two Festivals to you before, have I?

KATE: Not to me.

JACK: Well, they begin very formally, very solemnly with the ritual sacrifice of a fowl or goat or a calf down at the bank of the river. Then the ceremonial cutting and anointing of the first yams and the first casava; and we pass these round in huge wooden bowls. Then the incantation--a chant, really--that expresses our gratitude and that also acts as a rhythm or percussion for the ritual dance. And then, when the thanksgiving is over, the dance continues. And the interesting thing is that it grows

> naturally into a secular celebration; so that almost imperceptibly the religious ceremony ends and the community celebration takes over. And that part of the ceremony is a real spectacle. We light fires round the periphery of the circle; and we paint our faces with coloured powders; and we sing local songs; and we drink palm wine. And then we dance--and dance--and dance--children, men, women, most of them lepers, many of them with misshapen limbs, with missing limbs-- dancing, believe it or not, for days on end! It is the most wonderful sight you have ever seen! (*Laughs*) That palm wine! They dole it out in horns! You lose all sense of time . . . !
>
> Oh, yes the Ryangans are a remarkable people: there is no distinction between the religious and the secular in their culture. And of course their capacity for fun, for laughing, for practical jokes--they've such open hearts! In some respects they're not unlike us. . . **(*Dancing* 45-48).**

There are several elements of Carnival identifiable in the above excerpt. Father Jack's description of the African ceremonies include references to eating, drinking, dancing, singing and masquerade. Some of these elements may also be identified with the Roman Catholic Mass. Like the African rituals, the Mass involves the ritualistic offering, and then the eating and drinking of consecreated bread and wine (called Holy Communion in the Catholic belief) followed by thanksgiving. Frequently with the Mass there is communal singing. But there are definite differences. Dancing would be chief among them. Likewise *laughter* and *fun* in the African rituals are identified as intrinsic to the spiritual, as integral to the concept of celebration and thanksgiving. But the suggestion here is emphatically not that these elements are entirely absent from Irish life: "In some respects they're not unlike us." The priest's speech acts as a reminder to Kate (us) that the Mass (and other Christian ceremonies) does not have to be divorced from fun and laughter and dancing--that, in fact, these qualities constitute the essence of worship along with sacrifice, praise and thanksgiving. The speech calls to mind Bakhtin's claim that Carnival involves all the people as performers as well as spectators and of the Carnival capacity for laughter which uncrowns,

renews and which ultimately cleanses. We have seen previously the capacity for parody and "transformation downward" towards prayer and piety in the Irish culture with regard to "St. Patrick's Hole" and the capacity for merrymaking in the face of death with the graveyard ice-cream and cotton candy. Subversion, laughter and fun are not alien to the Irish experience but rather an active part of it. But there has been an apparent disconnection of these elements, a separation effected in this culture between things spiritual (sacred, religious, pious) and things material (secular, corporal). This disconnection is identified in this play as intrinsic to the Irish culture, but it may be extended to embrace all of Western culture and include other religious beliefs and practices which may be perceived as equally representative of the "religious" status quo.[13] Father Jack, in his role as spiritual advisor, seeks to restore the essence of community to the Irish concept of the spiritual. Kate teaches him to exercise that he might be restored to physical health. But he is her teacher, and ours also. He seeks to restore us to spiritual health. The Irish Outcast's spiritual advice to his flock (his sisters and the audience) is the "rule" of misrule.

To sum up the music/dance element in the play, we are presented here with four dances and one speech about dance. The dances all vary as to style, composition and meaning. We have the sisters' Irish jig, the only dance which features all five of the sisters, accompanied by Marconi. The Gerry/Chris Gerry/Agnes American dances feature two people, again to Marconi's music. Father Jack dances his African dance by himself, unaccompanied, except for his unintelligible muttering. Father Jack describes for us another kind of African dance which involves the entire Ryangan community accompanied by the chant and rhythm of the community itself. The four dances act as a dramaturgical metaphor for the dynamic between or among the characters in each of these scenes, a dynamic that is readily communicated despite, or more correctly because of, the lack of words to articulate it.

ACT II: The Final Banquet :

> "I came out to *enjoy myself,* and ran into a *funeral* . . . . I haven't been in a graveyard for about 25 years, I bet. What a place!
>
> First of all, the *scent (dux).* About fifteen corpses *arrived. Shrouds of various prices;* there were even two catafalques: for a general and for some rich lady or other. Many *mournful faces* and lots of feigned mourning, but also lots of *genuine jollity.* The clergy has nothing to complain about: *the money's coming in* . But the *scent, the scent (dux).* I wouldn't want to be the *spiritual leader* (*duxovnyi*) here. (a profanatory pun typical of the genre.)
>
> I glanced cautiously into the faces of the other corpses, because I was afraid of my impressionability. There are some gentle expressions, and also some unpleasant ones. In general the *smiles* are disagreeable, and some of them are even awfully . . .
>
> I left during the *service* to wander about *beyond the gate.* And I found a little restaurant that wasn't bad: one could have a bit to eat and everything. Many of the *mourners* had also jammed in. I noticed much *jollity and genuine animation. I had something to eat and drink* ". **(Bakhtin,*Poetics* 114)**

In the above quotation excerpted from Bakhtin's *Problems of Doestoevski's Poetics,* the author is analyzing the carnivalization of literature in one of Doestoevski's short stories, *Bobok.* The italics are his, and the purpose of the passage is to bring the reader's attention to the number of Carnival elements employed in one short passage. I have dealt previously with the "carnivalesque" structure of the play (juxtaposition of monologues

/scenes, time sequence, costumes, setting, properties, language) and with the context of Carnival (disguise, parodic travesty, laughter, crowning/uncrowning, death and misrule) in each of the dance passages. There are many, many instances of Carnival activity other than dance-music in the scenic portions of the play and rather than attempting to investigate all of them, I have elected to examine the Second Act of the play because I believe in combining many different elements of Carnival it is a miniature emblem of the entire play. The play ends with the celebration of a harvest supper or picnic which features the entire eight-character cast. During the course of this festive finale (i.e., the Second Act) the following carnivalesque activities take place:

1. The Second Act opens with Maggie *singing* and *dancing* to her *parody* of "Gypsy".
2. Father Jack makes his first entrance in his *sister's sweater*. (*Disguise, Role Reversal*) :

> (JACK *enters. He looks much stronger and is very sprightly and alert. He is not wearing the top coat or the hat but instead a garish-colored--probably a sister's--sweater. His dress looks now even more bizarre.)* (***Dancing*** **45**)

3. We hear the peal of the *bell* [14] to celebrate Austin Morgan's *wedding*. *(Feast)* [15] This marks the occasion as a double celebration as the *Feast* of Lughnasa is also being celebrated.
4. Maggie tells Michael and then Agnes, a *riddle*.
5. Father Jack quotes *poetry*. The content is carnivalesque and the poetry contributes to the multifarious "carnivalized" structure of the play:

> 'O ruddier than the cherry,
> O sweeter than the berry,
> O nymph more bright
> Than moonshine night,
> Like kidlings blithe and merry' **(*Dancing* 46).**

6. Father Jack describes the *dancing, singing, praise-giving, fun , laughter* and *drinking* and the *ringing of the gong (bell)* that characterize the African ceremonies. See 3 (above) for explanation of the gong as carnivalesque.

7. Rose returns from her *romantic* outing with Danny Bradley, having taken along a packet of *chocolate biscuits* and a bottle of *milk* to *celebrate* a *picnic*. We watch her *eat* bilberries on her return and note that she is carrying a *red poppy* and is more nicely *dressed* than in the first part of the play. (*Costume, disguise):*

> *She is dressed in the good clothes described by AGNES and they have changed her appearance. Indeed, had we not seen the ROSE of Act I we might not now be immediately aware of her disability. At first look this might be any youngish country woman, carefully dressed, not unatttractive, returning from a long walk on a summer day* **(*Dancing* 56).**

8. Michael's monologue foretells of several different *deaths* (Agnes, Rose, Gerry) in the future.

9. Gerry invites Chris up to *make love* in the sycamore tree.

10. Father Jack gives his formal approval of communal *sex*. He informs the sisters that if they return to Ryanga with him he could guarantee a husband for the four of them. He claims that this system works very efficiently, that the result is a commune where husbands, wives and children all help everybody else, and that he is "completely in favour of it " **(*Dancing* 63).**

11. Gerry *dances* and *sings* to the accompaniment of "Anything Goes" by Marconi, first with Agnes and later, briefly, with Maggie.

12. Gerry *kisses* Agnes and then Chrissie.

13. Rosie brings in her pet rooster which has *died* and places him on the tablecloth. There is the implicit suggestion that the rooster may have been killed by Father Jack as a sacrifice to commemorate Lughnasa.

14. Maggie and Agnes get the cups and plates and spread a tablecloth on the *ground* in the *garden* to prepare for *supper*.

15. Father Jack appears in his British Army uniform (*costume)*--a soiled and tattered version of the tableau at the top of the play.

16. Gerry and Uncle Jack enact a *ritual* for the company whereby they exchange *hats* (*costume, masquerade or the giving of gifts*): Father Jack gives Gerry his ceremonial tricorn and Gerry gives Father Jack his straw hat.
17. Gerry does a *burlesque* of Charlie Chaplin (*Parody*).
18. Gerry shows Michael's artwork on the kites, a pair of *grinning* (*laughter, fun*) faces. These have not been seen previously by the audience.

The play's last scene, then, ends on a festive note: everyone singing, dancing, telling jokes, kissing, talking and making preparation to eat and drink. It is the occasion for celebrating the harvest (Lughnasa) and a wedding. Death is also present both actually and figuratively. But Rosie's dead pet rooster is not a calamity--he is placed in the middle of the tablecloth and Maggie jokes that she will teach the next rooster better manners early on. We know from Michael's monologue that other deaths are imminent. The dramatic irony of this monologue imbues the entire banquet with an air of carnivalesque death: we know of the impending "end" of all of this even as we watch the merrymaking. We are presented with a community of diverse people: the prim schoolteacher, the capricious lover, the renegade priest, the "love child", the five sisters each with a different destiny, all gathered together, all celebrating Lughnasa, all moving into the future--with whatever it holds. The dramatic irony supplied by the monologue where we (the audience) know the destinies of the characters renders the scene tragi-comic for the audience watching. But the characters themselves, engrossed in their celebrations of Lughnasa, are merry in their festive revelry. The scene in a sense parallels the African community of Father Jack's dancing lepers:

> This is the reason why the banquet as a triumphal celebration and renewal often fulfills the function of completion. It is equivalent to nuptials (an act of procreation). Two epilogues are combined in the image of the wedding feast that concludes folktales. The fact is that "a feast" and " a wedding", put together in the nuptial banquet, offer a completed picture: the potentiality of a new beginning instead of a bare and abstract ending. Characteristically enough, death is never such a completion in the folktale. Even if it appears at the end of the story, it is followed by the funeral banquet (as in the *Iliad*)

> which forms the true epilogue. This form is related to the ambivalence of all folk images. The end must contain the potentialities of the new beginning, just as death leads to a new birth . . .
> **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 283).**

Father Jack's speeches on love children and communal marriage are not to be compared to Gerry's "gaily deceptive" offers of love to Chris and his extravagant compliments to Agnes. Bakhtin refers to the banquet as the "occasion for wise discourse, for the gay truth. There is an ancient tie between the feast and the spoken word" **(Bakhtin, Rabelais 283).** He also points out the link with the future which is integral to the banquet tradition of the "toast". He reminds us of the ancient connection between food and labor, food and the collective, food and the universal:

> The grotesque symposium, the carnivalesque, popular-festive or antique "table-talks" provided him with the laughing tone, the vocabulary, the entire system of images which expressed his own conception of truth. The banquet with its variations was the most favorable milieu for this absolutely fearless and gay truth. Bread and wine (the world defeated through work and struggle) disperse fear and liberate the word. The merry triumphant encounter with the world in the act of eating and drinking, in which man partakes of the world instead of being devoured by it, was profoundly congenial to Rabelais' outlook. This victory over the world in the act of eating was concrete, tangible, bodily. It gave the very taste of the defeated world, which had fed and would feed mankind. In this image there was no trace of mysticism, no abstract-idealistic sublimation.
>
> This image materializes truth and does not permit it to be torn away from the earth, at the same time preserving the earth's universal and cosmic nature. The themes of table talk are always "sublime", filled with "profound wisdom", but these themes are uncrowned and renewed on the material bodily level. The grotesque symposium does not have to respect hierarchical distinction; it

> freely blends the profane and the sacred, the lower and the higher,the spiritual and the material. . . .Wine liberates from fear and sanctimoniousness. *In vino veritas. . .* **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 285-86).**

This final scene from the play does not resemble the banquet Bakhtin is referring to in every respect. The most notable difference is that in this final scene of *Dancing* the characters are not actively engaged in eating and drinking but are only preparing to do so. Nevertheless, the scene possesses more than enough similarities to the banquet tradition to embody this carnivalesque view. Particularly noteworthy is Father Jack as the dispenser of "gay truth" with its praise-abuse complex in an atmosphere which is celebratory, victorious, fun-filled and futuristic. We have all three male Agents of Carnival participating in this scene--Father Jack, Gerry and Marconi--but it is Father Jack who appears to host the banquet. I have discussed Father Jack as the Irish Outcast, in his former speech about the African ceremonies. His role as banquet host might be perceived as the counterpart to the first one, yet the essence of both occasions is remarkably similar. Here he transports the scene out of Ireland and into Africa with his invitation of communal marriage for his sisters and his enactment of the "swap" ceremony with Gerry. His endorsement of the African communal marriage is a paean of praise to this African tradition even as it implicitly abuses the Roman Catholic sacrament of marriage favored by Kate. Father Jack has "praise" for love and sexual relations, for Gerry, for Africa, for Ireland, for unity. Implicit in his praise is his "abuse" of conventional piety, conformity and tradition. It is his emphasis on merrymaking, revelry, and fun which seeks to unite Ireland and Africa. He is the spiritual dispenser of the truth, the man of God who brings the word of God to the people; but his truth is a degraded, uncrowned, materialistic truth which in its Carnival essence embraces the true spirit of community, of thanksgiving, of love, of God and the gods. The audience is part of the "flock" Father Jack seeks to embrace. His sermon, his counselling, his wisdom, extend beyond Africa, beyond Ireland, beyond any particular audience. Everyone is invited to the banquet. All are invited to eat and drink--at Mass, at Lughnasa, at the Festival of the Sweet Casava, at whatever. Father Jack as our banquet host is the "wise fool" and the "tragic clown"which Bakhtin identifies as part of carnivalized literature. Bakhtin, in the preface to *The Brothers Karamazov*,

identifies this "ridiculous eccentric" as integral to the spirit of the carnivalesque menippea: [16]

> For the eccentric is not only "not always" an exception and an isolated case, but on the contrary, it often happens that precisely he is the one who carries within himself the *marrow of the whole* . . . (IX,9) **(Bakhtin, *Poetics* 125).**

How Carnival is used:

It is possible, I think, to interpret this play in two entirely different ways with respect to Carnival; the ambivalence of interpretation here is not unrelated to the "dual", dialectical nature of the Carnival principle itself. We have seen this ambiguity before in both *The Freedom of the City* and in *Fathers and Sons*. If subversion is the stuff of which the "carnivalesque" is fashioned, it is fitting that no one, lasting, final interpretation should emanate from this style/theme. Despite the fact that I have endeavoured to show the multiplicity of experimental dramaturgical styles in this play and have identified its theme as the exploration of the ritual which forms the basis for the concept of Carnival, it is possible to interpret the intention of the playwright here as actively anti-revolutionary. The claustrophobic Ballybeg of *Philadelphia Here I Come!* comes to us via the experimental, collectivist, variable dramaturgy the playwright has embraced and expanded upon in recent years. The "carnivalesque" festive style may be viewed as a deliberate dramaturgical ploy to underscore the cruel fates of all the characters involved in their seeming celebrations. Their dreams do not come true and we, the audience, are privy to this information even as we watch the characters heartbreakingly pursue them. From this point of view the play might be regarded as a "holiday" from the savage "every day" that will surely triumph--the "temporary immunity" as C. L. Barber dubbed it, from the inevitable status quo which shall surely prosper. The play ends with the "memory" monologue: Michael the narrator is the final speaker, and the characters, in tableau, are bathed in a "very soft, golden light". The accompanying music is "It is Time to Say Goodnight". The effect might well be construed as a final, regretful, poignant end.

But it is not impossible to regard the play as socio-political in its context, international in its scope, as extending beyond the story of these specific Irish lives in Ballybeg, albeit indirectly:

> The fact that his works, often dealing with specifically Irish traditions and identities, enjoyed such spectacular success internationally was much remarked upon yesterday when the President, Mrs. Robinson, presented playwright Brian Friel with Ireland's European of the Year award in Dublin.
>
> Mrs. Robinson said that the main consideration which made Mr. Friel the unanimous choice of the adjudicators this year "is the fact that the themes which engage him and his audiences are so relevant to the Europe of today. His characters and situations deal with the trauma of emigration, loneliness, the impact of industrialisation and technology, and the adaptation of culture". . . .
>
> Mrs. Robinson was presented with a bound edition of "Dancing at Lughnasa", signed by the playwright.[17]

Michael Etherton in *Contemporary Irish Dramatists* advances his theory of the present Irish theatre as opposed to the one which is more familiar (Yeats, Synge, O'Casey, etc.) to audiences and students of the theatre. He speaks of a new Irish nationalism, one which differs from the work of Yeats, Lady Gregory, the Fays, etc. in that this current nationalism depicts Ireland as part of a world "threatened by neo-colonialism and by the gross and increasing imbalance between rich and poor nations".[18] The point of focus has shifted: it does not preclude the English/Irish tension but, as is prefigured in *The Freedom of the City* reaches out to embrace a more comprehensive whole. *Freedom,* certainly, explicitly engages the English/Irish question but the sociologist Dodds also speaks of poverty in "international" terms--of how the plight of the poor wherever has everything to do with oppression everywhere. In *Freedom* Friel is moving

outward to embrace a wider political context. In *Fathers and Sons* he does this even more explicitly by actively extending the context to Russia. It is from this more contemporary vision that the carnivalesque *Dancing At Lughnasa* directly emerges. The play is about the underprivileged seeking the "privileges" of liberation. The "uncrowning","unmasking', "thrashing" and "abuse" of Ballybeg, of Catholicism, of Ireland is *implicitly* political, and in drawing comparisons and similarities between two cultures--Ireland and Africa--the playwright makes use of the medium of dance to explore the tension between authority and freedom, repression and expression. As we have seen, implicit in the principles of "uncrowning", "unmasking", "thrashing", abuse" and "death" is renewal. Dance is equally heralded for its restorative powers. It invokes freedom, laughter, fun, harmony, sexuality, praise, thanksgiving and reverence. It restores the sense of community which is crucial for political empowerment. I do not think Friel is suggesting that dance itself can empower people politically. I think he makes use of dance as the medium to explore the notions of freedom and power. The investigation by way of dance, then, is implicit rather than explicit. There are different types of dance, and this play explores this diversity and multiplicity in different compositions, under different circumstances. The play features dance/music which is Irish, American and African. It features dance performed as a group, as a couple, as a solo. The diversity and complexity of the dance metaphor is a reflection of the diversity and reflection of the play's structure but also of the many different types of communities seeking definition, expression and integration in the last decade of this century. Dance "uncrowns" separation or "sin" and celebrates the idea of community in its widest sense, in that it eschews words in favour of movement and gesture in this regard. It is a regression, if you will, to a more primitive, universally recognized vocabulary. Tyrone Guthrie, the theatre director who himself comes from County Donegal and with whom Friel apprenticed in Minneapolis in the late nineteen fifties, has remarked that "a work can only be universal if it is rooted in a part of its creator which is most privately and particularly himself. Such roots must sprout not only from the people but also the places which have meant most to him in his most impressionable years" **(O'Brien, 9 qtd).** Michael Etherton in his Abbey program note concurs:

In the global village we need more than ever to define our identity and become aware of other complex Third World cultural identities. Third World playwrights, like for example, the Nigerian Nobel Prize-winner Wole Soyinka, know more than most of us how hard it is to live with conflicting identities. Soyinka, like Friel, explores this through the memory of an atmosphere, and through dancing, in his great play, DEATH AND THE KING'S HORSEMAN. A number of European playwrights have tried to match this brilliant vision of the cultural totality of the modern world; but Friel to my mind is the first to have succeeded: in DANCING AT LUGHNASA he offers us a vision of growing up/old as Irish, Catholic, European, in a very wide world. [19]

END NOTES

[1] The Abbey production was designed by Joe Vanek, the lighting was by Trevor Dawson and the choreography by Terry John Bates.

[2] Alex Witchel, " On Stage and Off", *New York Times* 31 July 1992.

[3] Julie Kavanagh, "Friel At Last", *Vanity Fair* October 1991: 138.

[4] Abbey Theatre Program Note, "The Lughnasa Festival". The program lists the material from which my writing is compiled as originally extracted from *The Festival of Lughnasa* by Maire MacNeill, published by Comhairle Bhealoideas Eirann, University College Dublin, 1982 edition.

[5] William A. Henry III, "Potent Memories, Great Joys", *Time* 4 November 1991: 27.

[6] See Appendix One for Carnival Chart.

[7] Edwin Wilson, "Theater: Irish Heartache", *Wall St. Journal* 25 October 1991.

[8] Brian Friel, *Dancing At Lughnasa* (London: Faber and Faber, 1991) 62. Subsequent references in the text will identify the play as *Dancing*.

[9] Frank Rich, "A Drama Of Language, Not Necessarily Of Words", *New York Times* 25 October 1991.

[10] John Simon, "Dances And Wonders", *New York Magazine* 4 November 1991: 120.

[11] David Richards, "Embracing the Past While Holding It at Bay", *New York Times* 3 November 1991: H5.

[12] John Conroy, "Challenging the heart and the intellect", *Times-Colonist* 4 July 1992: B14.

[13] Larry Barber, "Cosmic Love: 'The Divine Image In all Things'," An Interview with Matthew Fox, *Science of Mind Magazine*, August 1992: 34. The following excerpts have been extracted from the above-mentioned work.

> *Matthew Fox is the founding director of The Institute in Culture and Creation Spirituality at Holy Names College in Oakland, California. Fox, a Dominican priest ordained in 1967, holds Master's degrees in Philosophy and Theology from Aquinas Institute and a Ph.D in Spiritual theology from the institute Catholique de Paris. . . .Fox, who was once silenced for a year by the Vatican for his controversial views on feminism, sexuality and the priesthood, lectures throughout the United States and Canada, Europe, New Zealand and Australia.*
>
> Barber: In your books you mention a need for the redemption of worship in churches. What do you mean?
>
> Fox: During the Newtonian era one of the calamities has been the mechanizing of worship, the closing down of the heart work and prayer so that most worship in the West is about reading. And when we read it takes place from the neck up. That's not deep and it's not powerful because prayer is about heart work and the heart is in the body, not in the head, and we have to get to the body to reawaken the heart. And compassion is in the guts. That's even a lower chakra in the body. We have to recover our guts, and worship should be the way to do this. As I said earlier, we have to develop rituals for grieving and rituals for truly celebrating. Things like circle dances that people do at some of our workshops. People really get into them. They're powerful and they're childlike. Worship is very, very important. I'm convinced that ritual is as basic to humanity as eating, drinking, and sex. And it ought to be at least as much fun, and yet where can you find this in our culture?

[14] I have not discussed the relationship of the *bell* or *bells* to Carnival previously. I have cited the wedding bell to herald the nuptials of Austin Morgan as carnivalesque because weddings occupy a special place in the carnivalesque canon. They are perceived as a variation on the old seasonal fertility rites so that while the wedding itself may be perceived as "official"there is the implication of the "unofficial", e.g: the bachelor party, which functions as the counter-festivity. I think it is possible to juxtapose the gong which Okawa rings to invite the Africans to the dancing rituals in Father Jack's speech as a kind of counter-festivity to the official festivity of the wedding. In any case there are three celebrations either going on or mentioned in **The Final Banquet**: The Feast of Lughnasa, Austin Morgan's wedding and the African ceremonies. Another carnivalesque instance of the bell is the pancake bell which rings at 11 am on Shrove Tuesday to signify the eating of pancakes before Lent. The following extract connecting bells and feasting (banquets) is taken from Bakhtin's *Rabelais And His World* for the purpose of clarification for the reader:

> The image of a small tinkling bell (usually a cowbell) appears even in the ancient carnivals as an indispensable accessory . . . . Cowbells figure in the descriptions of fourteenth century charivari in the *Roman de Fauvel*. The role of bells on the clown's costume and staff is well known. We still hear the jingling of carnival bells on bridal vehicles . . . .
>
> Church bells, cowbells, mulebells are to be attached not only to animals but to the beards of the feasting guests. The ringing and jingling of bells is to mark the movement of the munching jaws. It is hard to find an image picturing more strikingly, though coarsely, the logic of abusive uncrowning, destruction and regeneration. The bells have been uncrowned at their highest level; they are to be removed from the belfries of Poitiers, Rennes,Tours, and Cambrai and are to be suddenly used again in the context of festive food. They will revive their sound by marking the rhythm of

> masticating jaws. Let us add that this strange use of bells, suddenly introduced into the picture, leads to the rebirth of their image. They arise before us as something completely new, in a setting that is unusual and alien to bells as they commonly appear. The sphere in which the new birth of an image take place is a material bodily sphere, in this case a banquet. Let us also stress the literal topographically exact nature of the debasement: the bells are brought down from the high belfries and made to accompany chewing jaws **(214-215).**

[15] The following extract is taken from Bakhtin's *Rabelais And His World*, Introduction:

> The feast (every feast) is an important primary form of human culture. It cannot be explained merely by the practical conditions of the community's work, and it would be even more superficial to attribute it to the physiological demand for periodic rest. The feast had always an essential, meaningful philosophical content. No rest period or breathing spell can be rendered festive per se; something must be added from the spiritual and ideological dimension. They must be sanctioned not by the world of practical conditions but by the highest aims of human existance, that is , by the world of ideals. Without this sanction there can be no festivity.
>
> The feast is always essentially related to time, either to the recurrence of an event in the natural (cosmic) cycle, or to biological or historic timeliness. Moreover, through all the stages of historic development feasts were linked to moments of crisis, of breaking points in the cycle of nature or in the life of society and man. Moments of death and revival, of change and renewal always led to a festive perception of the world. These moments expressed in concrete form, created the peculiar character of the feasts **(8-9).**

[16] In Chapter One, I identified carnivalized literature in several forms: the Socratic dialogue, bucolic poetry and Menippean satire. The following is a condensation of a much fuller and explicit discussion of this last genre as it relates to Carnival in Bakhtin's *Problems of Doestoevski's Poetics*. The italics are Bakhtin's:

> The genre takes its name from the philosopher Menippos of Gadara (3rd century B.C.) who gave it its classical form. Petronius' *Satyricon* is a "Menippean satire" which Bakhtin claims is extended almost to the status of a novel. The "Menippean" satires of Lucian, he says, give us the most complete notion of the genre; likewise *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius. The genre is characterized by a comic element and by *"extraordinary freedom of philosophical invention and of invention within the plot"*. It is characterized by "daring and unfettered fantasies which create *extraordinary situations* in which to provoke and test a philosophical idea--the word or the truth, embodied in the image of the wise man, the seeker after this truth." Fantasy combines with symbolism and the "mystical-religious element, with extreme and (from our point of view) crude *underworld naturalism*." Scandalous scenes, eccentric behaviour, incongrous speeches and performances i.e. violations of the generally accepted ordinary course of events and of the established norms of behavior and etiquette, including the verbal" also characterize the genre. It may contain sharp contrasts, oxymoronic combinations (the emperor who becomes a slave, the noble bandit, luxury and poverty), sharp transitions, ups and downs, rises and falls, unexpected comings together of distant and divided things. It may also include elements of what Bakhtin refers to as *social utopia* which may be introduced in the forms of dreams or journeys to unknown lands. It "inserts" other genres such as the novella, oratory, letters; the mixture of prose and verse diction is also characteristic. It may be parodic, and has been described as the "journalistic" genre of antiquity due to its topicality and publicistic quality **(93-97)**.

[17] Colm Boland,"President presents Friel with European Award", *Irish Times* 11 February 1992, 5.

18 Michael Etherton, *Contemporary Irish Dramatists* (London: MacMillan Publishers, 1989) Introduction, xvi.

19 Michael Etherton, *"Dancing At Lughnasa The Memory of an Atmosphere,"* Abbey Theatre Program.

Chapter Four: Carnival Characters and Conclusions

Carnival Characters in *Dancing*

My emphasis in this thesis so far has been dramaturgical rather than thematic with respect to the Carnivalesque and Brian Friel. I have endeavoured to examine four of the plays previous to *Dancing*, isolating the carnivalesque aspects of each's dramaturgy, pointing out the progressive evolution from a theatrical style essentially verbal (*Philadelphia Here I Come* !) to one significantly visual (*Dancing At Lughnasa*). I contend that there are two regularly recurring thematic aspects which signify major differences between this play and Friel's previous short stories and play. Both the role of the priest (Father Jack) and the role of the women (the five sisters) are significantly different from these types of characters appearing in Friel's previous short stories and plays. Priests have figured largely in Friel's previous works but women occupy in this play a much more active role than previously. Both Father Jack and the five sisters function as active agents of Carnival, and in the instance of Father Jack I propose that he emerges as significantly different from the priests of Friel's previous work. Regarding the five sisters I propose that this is the first time Friel has focused on women in such depth. The fact that there are *five* of them makes this departure even more significant. I perceive that their sexuality is acknowledged in a way that that it has not been for previous women characters.

In Chapter Three I explored the role of Father Jack with respect to the dance element of the play and also dubbed him the host of **The Final Banquet** . I made mention of the fact that he functions as a "double" agent in that he might be perceived as a liason between the Roman Catholic Church and the Ryangan rituals, between Ireland and Africa itself. He functions as an agent of the counter-festivity and in so doing calls attention to the "renewing " aspect of Carnival which comes about as a natural conclusion to the "uncrowning" and the "death". I call attention here to the fact that this is an entirely new place for the priest to occupy in Friel and I will explore, briefly, how he has been perceived formerly with respect to Carnival in Friel's previous works in order to

compare the priest character then and now. Likewise I will compare the five women to the women in Friel 's previous works specifically with respect to the carnivalesque the better to see how their portrayal in *Dancing* is greatly extended upon and amplified. I contend that this portrayal of the priest Father Jack and the five women is the distinguishing thematic hall mark of *Dancing At Lughnasa* . Priests and women occupy very specific places in the literary tradition of Carnival, and before dealing with the work of Friel per se I will look briefly at the position they occupy in the carnivalesque canon. For this purpose I have chosen the sixteenth century Shrovetide plays of the German Hans Sachs principally because these plays offer numerous examples of both these groups as Agents of Carnival.

The Priest As A Carnival Element

> " We want to show more. More respect! " they reply. " It's all decided. We will kiss his bare bum and other parts as well. For he has them, the holy father has! So it is spoken in our great Decretals. Otherwise he wouldn't be the pope. In fact our subtle Decretline philosophy tells us that this is a necessary consequence--he is a pope, therefore he has these organs. If there ceased to be such organs in the world, the world would have no pope. "
> **(Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 191 qtd.)**

Carnivalesque travesty in the *Christian literary* tradition goes all the way back to the Scriptures and the Gospels. Bakhtin points to the dialogical element in the "acts of the apostles", the "apocalypse" and the "lives of the saints and martyrs" : the tempted man with the tempter, the believer with the non-believer, the righteous man with the sinner, the beggar with the rich man, etc. He ascribes this *dialogical approach to oneself* to Epictetus, Marcus Aurelius and Augustine.

Jan Kott in *The Bottom Translation* makes the claim that Paul, particularly in the First Letter to the Corinthians , is widely quoted in carnivalesque literature as well as in the writings of the Neoplatonists. It is a question Kott says of how he is interpreted. In the carnivalesque tradition, the fool is perceived as wise and his

madness is perceived as true "wisdom". The following three quotations, according to Kott, are most often cited in the carnivalesque canon:

> Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? (1.20)
>
> And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are. (1.28)
>
> If any among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. (3.18-19) **(*Kott* 41)**

The "parodia sacra" or sacred parody of the Middle Ages was a parodic travesty of sacred texts and rituals, degrading and ridiculing the higher powers. Parodies appeared of the Pater Noster, the Ave Maria and countless other prayers and hymns as well as parodies of epitaphs, wills, sermons and council decrees. These compositions were remarkable for their popular comic spirit, and the concepts of degradation, uncrowning and renewal frequently pervaded them. It is important to remember that parody enjoyed a recognized and legalized freedom by the Church itself; Bakhtin in *The Dialogic Imagination* identifies the "dialogized" quality of the parody by stating that in such works there are actually *two* languages, *two* styles, *two* linguistic points of view, *two* speaking subjects present: those of the parody itself and by implication and thus, invisibly, those of the original work being parodied. One of the best-known examples from the Middle Ages of the grotesque tradition combined with religious or sacred material is the *Coena Cypriani* or "Cyprian's Supper". [1]

The Middle Ages produced a whole body of literature whose chief function was the parodic-travestying of Latin, the official language of the church and Scriptures. Monks occupied a special place in the comic literature of the Middle Ages as writers of parodies and semi-parodies in Latin. The Latin parody was widespread, and the carnivalesque found its way into medieval secular literature

as well. Monks were the authors of parodic travesties of sacred literature, but they functioned also as the objects of travesty themselves:

> In Rabelais Friar John is the incarnation of the mighty realm of travesty of the low clergy. He is a connoisseur of "all that concerns the breviary (en matiere de breviere): this means that he can reinterpret any sacred text in the sense of eating, drinking, and eroticism, and transpose it from the Lenten to the carnival "obscene" level. Generally speaking we can find in Rabelais' novel a sufficiently abundant material of travestied sacred texts and sayings which are scattered throughout his work. For instance, Christ's last words on the cross, *sitio* ("I thirst") and *consummatum est* (it is consummated) are travestied into terms of eating and overindulgence. *Venite, apotemus* (come and have a drink) replaced *venite adoremus.* **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 86).**

Hans Sachs (1494-1576) was the son of a tailor and a cobbler by profession. For the majority of his life he lived from the earnings of his trade rather than his writing which included 4, 275 works (songs, poetry, fables, a famous defense of Martin Luther, sixty-one tragedies, sixty five comedies, and eighty-five *Fastnachtsspiele* . [2]

The city of Nuremberg is the place where the development of this genre is most plainly to be seen. These Carnival plays arose out of the actual festive revelry (drinking, dancing, the telling of jokes and ribald stories) of the butchers, bakers and tradesmen during the pre-Lenten festivites. These festivities formed the basic framework for the later plays in which this spirit of play and celebration was extended to humorous monologues delivered by several characters, with one character as a spokesman for the group, introducing the other participating members to the audience. Active audience participation was encouraged, with the audience frequently joining in a dance with the actors, and this audience participation was deemed an intrinsic part of the revelry. An interest in food, wine, sex and the "sheer love of waggery" occupied the characters of these plays. The trickster, "on perennial holiday from conformity", is a frequently found character. These Shrovetide farces were characterized by everyday situations ,

peasant settings and family scenes. The immorality of monks was a recurrent theme in these farces: [3]

> Sachs by no means confined his humorous persecution to the country folk. There was plenty of wit to spill over onto other groups such as the clergy. Sachs never neglected a chance to deal a blow to a clergyman. While he, as mentioned previously, was an ardent supporter of Martin Luther and the reformation, his attacks generally were not pointed at Catholicism per se. He preferred to shoot his arrows at the man rather than the religious faith the individual represented. At that time all priests were by no means always pillars of society and moral examples to their flock. The clergy stands accused of immorality and corruption in three plays in this edition : *The Stolen Bacon, The Grand Inquisitor in the Soup,* and *The Farmer with the Blur* . The priest, in his own way, becomes a comic figure as well under Sachs's treatment. He was used for amusement as much as diactic accusation. The reason for placing the priest in this position may be two-fold, stemming both from the behavior of the priests themselves and from the general joy of poking fun at a person in a superior position.To be sure, the three representations of the priesthood herein are not respectable or praiseworthy. Sachs shows little mercy with their shortcomings. Nevertheless, the treatment is one of indulgent criticism rather than a broadside of partisan condemnation and judgment.
> **(Sachs, Introduction 22-23)**

I have chosen to give one illustration of the carnivalized priest in the work of Hans Sachs from a play entitled *The Stolen Bacon,* for I believe it illustrates the context of Carnival in several different ways with respect to the way the priest is represented:

> PRIEST: Good tidings, my neighbors. What's up? Town meeting?

HERMANN: Oh, dear Sir, why shouldn't I complain? Right now in the early evening I lost my bacon. I mean it's been stolen. Yes, stolen! Please, sir, couldn't I ask you to do some of your black magic? Use your hocus-pocus to bring that sow thief to justice. Make him give me back my beloved bacon.

PRIEST: Dear Hermann. Of course, I can. And indeed I shall. Via my magic prowess and art, I shall indicate who is guilty of stealing your bacon.

HERMANN: Sir! Do it! Before it's too late, before the thief hears tell about it. I want that bacon away from that thief no matter who he is.

PRIEST: If I am to indicate, however, who the thief is, then I must use my art. Notice, I have in my hand a branch from a ginger plant. I shall place the branch down, utter my imploring oath and blessing; and then each person takes some. He who can eat his portion without bitterness is summarily free of guilt of the theft. But, he who finds the ginger leaf to be bitter as gall, then he indeed is the bacon thief. Hermann, if you wish, we can start the magic procedure. Obviously, I can not arrange the preparations for gratis, as they say. Do give me five dollars so I can initiate the procedure to determine whether your bacon still wants to belong to you.

HERMANN: Oh! Oh, I don't have any money on me dear priest. I buried some in the garden, though, so my wife wouldn't find it. I'll go right now and dig it up. All five dollars, just like you said. Could you hold the trick for just a moment ?

PRIEST: I'll summon you back as soon as possible. And I summon your neighbors, together with you, to meet in the churchyard by the wall. There we shall test all those present if my calculations do not fail me.

(Hermann runs off stage.)

HEINZ: Father, how will this work ?

(The Priest lays the ginger branch on the ground.)

PRIEST: Heinz Knoll, look here. On these three leaves I have put sugar. The first one, I'll pick. You, Heinz, pick this one here. And you, Kunz, take this third one. The leaf on the inside is for Hermann. See, it's covered with aloe powder and dogshit. I've sprinkled sugar on top so Hermann will be fooled. He won't be able to eat this little morsel. With his gagging he'll proclaim loud and clear--even he will believe--that he himself is the bacon thief. He stole it to give to his little girlfriend Striegel. He'll be so confused--and you be very serious about his theft--that we'll pull the thing off. We'll cover our trick and probably scare some more money out of him. Then, by God, let's go get that bacon and heave to, keeping quiet among us with appropriate God-like stillness and honor.

HEINZ: Hold it down! Listen! Here comes Hermann running the whole way back.

(Hermann Doll runs on stage, handing money to the Priest.)

HERMANN: Here they are, Father. Five dollars fresh from the earth so's to catch that thief. And here's another fiver just to make sure you really try hard to make the magic work.

(The Priest picks up the ginger plant.)

PRIEST: Now hear ye, hear ye the oath.
In Narribus phantastibus
Nequamque et in diebibus
Hanges in galgare Fane
Rabiquenagare pame.

Now all of you sit down next to each other. Each one of you take a leaf of ginger, my children. He who is able to chew and then swallow the leaf is completely innocent of the bacon theft. But he who is unable to swallow the leaf suffers the revenge of the stolen bacon. He then will be guilty and he is the one who has committed the theft. In order to test the magic, I will be the first to submit myself to the test .

(The priest eats the leaf.)
(Sachs, *The Stolen Bacon*, 43-44)

In the above excerpt, the "carnivalized"priest is a liar and a trickster and a grubber for money. The idea of the trickster in these Carnival plays is intrinsically related to the idea of celebrating, revelling, playing, as well as having a joke at the expense of another. He also swears and parodies Latin, and elsewhere in the play we are given to understand he is inordinately fond of drink. This portrait is typical rather than atypical of priests in Shrovetides farces of the period. The renunciation of one's official status which characterizes Carnival also included clerics. But it is important to take note that the priest functions in a "double" sense with respect to Carnival here. He is the butt of jokes but he also performs a didactic role in the play which equally involves the "uncrowning" of the stinginess, greediness and corruption of the peasants. It is the priest who teaches Herman Doll a lesson, who, as an agent of Carnival, cleanses and renews. The priest is the spokesman for Sachs and utters the last two lines of the play.

In the plays of Brian Friel the "carnivalization" of priests is undergone in both a similar and actively different way. As in the plays of Sachs, Friel's priests are frequently "carnivalized" with respect to activities such as singing, dancing and drink. But unlike Sachs' priests, Friel's priests function *only* as icons of the status quo and in no way bring about cleansing, change and renewal. They are shown as impotent in their function as spiritual advisors and as active supporters of the status quo. I have selected three priests from Friel's plays over a span of thirty years to chart how the otherwise carnivalized priest is continually held up in an unflattering light. The priests selected here are more typical than not of the portrayal of all priests in Friel's work up to *Dancing*.

> The only one who seems to have failed to come to terms with the ending of their Romantic world in a more insistent petit bourgeois one is Anna, Father's favorite, now a nun and missionary in Africa. Like Friel's other divines she is mercilessly caricatured. Even though there are only a few moments of her voice on a tape, everything she utters to her family shows her to be lacking in understanding and

> sensibility, her "work" in Africa a mask for her ignorance and a continuing expression of it.
> **(Etherton 191)**

The one major exception to this pattern would be the character of St. Columba in *The Enemy Within*. . Like Friel's other priests Columba is a Carnival figure with respect to many of his activities. He also combines his piety with his ability to work miracles. He is portrayed as a deeply spiritual man who undergoes a tremendous inner conflict with his conscience. This is the only such example of a priest in Friel's work prior to *Dancing* and we must remember with respect to *The Enemy Within* that he is dealing with an historical figure. In short stories such as *The Diviner* the traditional priest is contrasted with the diviner. Father Curran with his rosaries in this story is unable to give help to the grieving widow and unable to locate the body of the drowned man. The diviner, who is looked upon as an outcast of the society of the small Irish village, is able to put his special powers to work and locate the missing body. This unofficial priest possesses the true powers, the true spiritual nature that the official priest lacks:

> "He'll come if we go for him," McElwee persisted. "They say he's like a priest--he can never refuse a call." **4**

The magic maker and /or the miracle worker in juxtaposition to the priest, has special powers ascribed to him throughout Friel's body of work. Frank Hardy likewise is viewed as an unofficial priest in *Faith Healer*. But the greater majority of Friel's carnivalized priests in both the plays and the short stories are accurately represented by the three examples below. Their identification with carnivalesque activities might almost seem to act as a mask for their authentic lack of humanity or real understanding or a deliberate ploy to deflect from their roles as sustainers of a repressive, sometimes violent, status quo.

1. Canon Mick O'Byrne in *Philadelphia Here I Come !* (1964)

The canon *plays cards* with S.B. O'Donnell on a regular basis and enjoys a *joking* relationship with both S. B. and the housekeeper, Madge. He is an expert at clever, breezy conversation which never once addresses the real agonies his

parishioners are confronted with on a daily basis. Of him, Private Gar says in despair:

> . . .you could translate all this loneliness, this groping, this dreadful bloody buffoonery into Christian terms that will make life bearable for us all. And yet you don't say a word. Why, Canon? Why, arid Canon? Isn't this your job?--to translate? Why don't you speak, then? Prudence, arid Canon? Prudence be damned! Christianity isn't prudent--it's insane!
> **(*Philadelphia!* 208)**

2. Father Tom Cartey in *Living Quarters* (1977)

He is an old friend of the Butler family. He has baptized some members and married others. He *dances , sings and drinks* excessively. But he cannot address the serious problems--incest, suicide which beset this troubled family. When he does attempt to dispense his spiritual wisdom no one listens:

> TOM: I'm not a sermonizing kind of fellow--good Lord, you know me better than that--
>
> (*The others begin to drift away, each encased in his own privacy .*)
> --but I've got to speak what I know to be true, and that is that grace is available to each and every one of us if we just ask God for it--
>
> SIR: Yes--here we are.
>
> TOM: --which is really the Christian way of saying that our options are always open. Because that is the enormous gift that Christ purchased for us--the availability of choice and our freedom to choose.
>
> (*He stops and looks around .* SIR *is poised with his finger on his ledger--he has all the time in the world .* ANNA and FRANK *have gone.* HELEN, BEN *and* TINA *have not heard a word he has said. His rally falters.*) [5]

3. Peter Lombard, Titular Bishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland, in *Making History* (1988)

The following is a description of the Archbishop's first carnivalesque entrance in the play. He is returning from a Papal visit to Rome and arrives bearing gifts. He is a "political" priest to the extent that his priesthood appears to be the"disguise" he wears to conceal his true pragmatic and ambitious nature:

> ARCHBISHOP LOMBARD *is a contemporary of* O'NEILL. *By profession he is a church diplomat and his manner is careful and exact. But he is also a man of humour and perception and by no means diminished by his profession. He now carries a large candleabra and an elegant birdcage.* **6**

The following is an excerpt where Lombard speaks about *drink*. The italics are mine, with the exception of the stage directions.

> LOMBARD: . . .But it's a very special bottle, Harry. Poitin. waterford poitin. *I was never much help to their spiritual welfare but they certainly don't neglect the state of my spirit* ! (*Laughs.*). . .This, I assure you, is ambrosia . . . .I'll leave this aside for you and if you feel like joining us later. . . . And for the Earl himself, just a drop. It's a pure nectar, Hugh. (*He takes a sip and relishes it.*) Tell me this: are the very special delights of this world foretastes of eternity or just lures to perdito? It's from my own parish; a very remote place called Affane, about ten miles from Dungarvan. And it has been made there for decades by an old man who claims he's one of Ormond's bastards. If he is, God bless bastards--God forgive me. (*takes another sip.*) Exquisite, isn't it? Affane must be an annex of heaven--or Hades **(*History* 61).**

At the end of the play, Lombard assesses his part in the writing of Hugh O'Neill's history. Again, the italics are mine:

> Now is the time for a hero. Now is the time for a heroic literature. So I am offering Gaelic Ireland two things. I'm offering them this narrative that has the elements of myth. And I'm offering them Hugh O'Neill as a national hero. A hero and the story of a hero. (*Pause.*) It's a very worldly notion for a clergyman to propose--isn't it? *I suppose, if I were a holy man, not some kind of a half priest, half schemer, I suppose I would offer them God and prayer and suffering* . But there are times when a hero can be as important to a people as a God. And isn't God--or so I excuse my perfidy--isn't God the perfect hero?
> **(*History* 67)**

All three priests referred to in the examples above may be described as "carnivalesque" or "carnivalized" figures but they in no way function as agents of change, renewal or subversion. To the contrary, all three function as sustainers of the status quo--Christianity, which purports to have the best interests of man and his spiritual welfare as its aim and yet in practice either does nothing of the kind or actively works in the opposite direction. In *Dancing At Lughnasa* Father Jack is "carnivalized" in a manner similar yet radically different from the priests in the examples above. We know him to be a drinker of palm wine but unlike Father Cartey he is not an alcoholic. He too is a giver of gifts--giving his tricorn to Gerry for instance. But the gift is given from the heart, not in the spirit of Lombard's role of political correctness. Father Jack *dances* , quotes *poetry* approves of communal *sex* , and dons his *sister's sweater*. Father Jack is a true spiritual guide, a "father" in the best sense of the word. And paradoxically he has been able to achieve this through his absorption of the religious rituals of a primitive people, far beyond the parameters of the Roman Catholicism of which he is an official representative. He is espoused in the play as a truly holy man in his remarkable love and acceptance of all humanity, Irish, African, whatever, despite or because of, their unique difference. Father Jack represents the fusion of the pagan and Christian worlds in the play. He symbolizes the integration of apparent contradictions, of the official life with the "second" life. This tension is represented in Friel's earlier work not only on a religious but also on a secular level. Ballybeg and all it represents in the way of small town life is as surely an icon for the status quo as the Catholic Church. Friel's characters--the alienated Private Gar, the restless, driven Skinner, the agonized Hugh O'Neill--engage in

their futile struggles with the powers that be. The priests either way say nothing or like Father Cartey say too much, which amounts to nothing. But Father Jack is a unique creation. In the creation of this priest Friel has forged a spiritual advisor who represents true community, real spiritual renewal. He is "uncrowned" and "transformed downward" from the Catholicism of bogus authority and masquerading community. He actively "degrades" Catholicism (that is, brings it down to earth) with his marked preference for the African rituals of Ryanga and his whole-hearted admiration of its people. But this uncrowning, this degradation, this transformation downward has fantastic possibilities with respect to defining the concept of true community. It symbolizes a renewal, perhaps for Christianity, for Catholicism, for Ballybeg, for mankind.

The creation of this priest who indulges in carnivalesque activities and who also functions as an agent of the "second" life represents the reconciliation of two opposing forces in Friel's short stories and plays up to this time. He belongs to the tradition of the diviner in *The Diviner* rather than the priest. But he is also a priest, albeit one who has recently been relieved of his duties precisely because he has championed the "second", "other", unofficial life. He stands outside authority and convention and in so doing acquires a truth that the official priest cannot. In Chapter Three I quoted Friel as saying that he believes a writer must continually subvert his prior work for fear of attaching himself to a static orthodoxy. Father Jack represents a subversion on Friel's part of the former priests he has created. He is a new idea. He is the spokesman for Friel himself. In a sense, Father Jack supplies the answer to Private Gar's agonizing question in *Philadelphia !* He does translate Christianity into comprehensible terms that make life not only bearable but possible.

> . . .as a diviner, Friel occupies that dangerous position described by Victor Turner in referring to "shamans, diviners, mediums, priests" as outsiders in a society's rite of passage. They precipitate actions and relationships which do not flow from a recognized social status but originate outside it. This sacerdotal profession is obviously most crucial in a society which seems, like the tribes which make up the sense of Ireland, or "concepts of Irishness", to be continually experiencing a rite of passage, a transition from past

> to future, from mythos to logos, from becoming to being **(*Pine* 5).**

Woman As Carnival Element:

> She is a foil to his avarice, jealousy, stupidity, hypocrisy, bigotry, sterile senility, false heroism, and abstract idealism . . . . She represents in person the undoing of pretentiousness, of all that is finished, completed, and exhausted. She is the inexhaustible vessel of conception, which dooms all that is old and terminated. Like the Sybil of Panzoult in Rabelais' novel, she lifts her skirts and shows the parts through which everything passes (the underworld, the grave) and from which everything issues forth.
> **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 240-241)**

Bakhtin in *Rabelais and His World* juxtaposes the place of women in the ascetic and popular comic traditions. He identifies the place of women in the popular tradition as extremely positive. He sees her as the one who both gives birth and the one who debases, degrades, brings down to earth and "lends a bodily substance to things":

> Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade is to bury, to sow, and to kill simultaneously, in order to bring forth something more and better. To degrade also means to concern oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception, pregnancy and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction, but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no

> other level; it is the fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving.
> **(Bakhtin, *Rabelais* , Introduction 21)**

In the Sachs farces this "degradation " concerning woman's nature manifests itself in the portrayal of women as wayward, sensual, concupiscent, false, material and base. But likewise woman is shown in contrast to the limitations of her partner--husband, lover, or suitor. In a sense, woman "uncrowns" and "transforms downward" the status quo, both marriage and patriarchy, mostly through the cuckolding of her husband, for the purpose of renewing or cleansing or replenishing. The "uncrowning " of marriage is a central theme found in the Carnival plays; the struggle between the sexes is depicted in comic terms with the wife attempting and usually succeeding in controlling and subjugating the husband:

> (*Steffano exits. Gitta , the wife enters and speaks* .)
>
> GITTA: So much the better if you come home drunk. Then I won't have to fill you up. Every night I have to wait until you pass out to let my lover in the house. Or sometimes we go to his place while my drunken fool husband lies there sleeping. He grunts and farts like a pig and how his putrid breath stinks. He dribbles like an old man--something that looks like pig slop. When I get back from my lover's I just lay down next to my sow and sleep until morning. I never worry that he'll suspect my lover because I get him so drunk every night he just passes out. Ha! Here he comes now staggering up. I think he is completely drunk.
>
> .....
>
> GITTA: Now I've got my sow in his stall. Now I'll be on my merry way. Tonight I can be real certain he won't wake up. Around one or two o'clock he'll start reaching around in bed just to make sure I'm there. He'll think I've been there all along. This great trick has worked every time for the last six months. He's drunk and I'm delighted with my lover. He fills his gut, and I get mine filled too, and I'm lying if it isn't so **(Sachs, *The Wife in the Well* 54-55).**

For the most part, the agents of Carnival in Friel's plays preceding *Dancing* are overwhelmingly male:Public and Private Gar (*Philadelphia Here I Come !*), Fox Melarkey (*Crystal and Fox*), Keeney and Pine (*Volunteers*), Hugh O'Neill (*Making History*). Unlike the "carnivalized" priest who appears copiously in Friel's short stories and plays, many of the women characters are not subjected to the kind of in-depth scrutiny that they are in *Dancing* , and more frequently than not in his previous works they have no connection to Carnival whatsoever. There are some exceptions, however, and I am proposing that the five Mundy sisters represent a zenith in the Carnival activity of Friel's women. The following is a selective sampling of Women as Agents of Carnival in Friel's prior works. I have attempted to enumerate only the most fully developed examples of Women as Agents of Carnival. The carnivalized women in Friel are not portrayed as wayward and tricky as in the Sachs farces In the traditional Shrovetide farces women were all mostly married women , the better to "uncrown" the conventon of marriage. This distinction does not mark the women agents of Carnival in Friel. Rather they are purveyors of the freedom principle and the pleasure principle , the axis on which the "second" life hinges:

1. Granny in "Mr. Sing My Heart's Delight" in *Saucer of Larks* (1962)

This short story of Friel's features the best example of woman as an Agent of Carnival in his entire body of work and I include it here along with examples from his plays for that reason. With respect to Carnival it is to the short stories what *Dancing* is to the plays: it represents the zenith of Carnival activity in Friel's short stories. Like Chrissie in *Dancing*, Granny is the mother of an illegitimate child, and in this case no one is sure who the father really is.

> The narrator recalls his annual winter visits as a child to his Grandmother's one-room house, deep in Donegal, while his Grandfather worked in Scotland. The story has links with the Rabelaisian tradition of Irish writing. Granny's daughter, the narrator's mother, was not the child of Grandfather. Now, secluded in the wilds by a possessive husband, Granny's prodigal spirit survives in a free but innocent

> swearing and a boisterous vitality, singing, dancing, running the moor, romancing about the liners that pass the coast: "Lords and Ladies", she would say, "the men of them handsome and straight as heroes and the women of them in bright silks down to their toes and all of them laughing and drinking wine and singing. "
>
> The cheap wares brought one day by an Indian packman, whom she christens "Mr. Sing my heart's delight," stimulate her dreams of exotic lands and people. She gives him food and lodging for the night, and when he leaves he presents her with his ring, "now black, now blood red, now blue, now the colour of sloes in the August sun." She thinks compassionately of his life on this alien soil, "rocky, barren, uneven, covered by a brown heather that never blooms"; and of her own life too. She is in a way an alien spirit herself, in her extravagant fancies unlike the region. Yet she is also of the place and its stark beauty, like the "wild geese spearing through the icy air high above the ocean." Her imagination and her generosity are part of it.
>
> It is a complex story full of images of flight, passage and the home, exile and communion. [7]

2. Cass McGuire in *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (1966)

Cass has returned to Ireland after fifty years of living and working in New York City behind a lunch counter in a diner. She is at least seventy, wears *gaudy* clothes and talks loudly and *coarsely* . She *smokes cigarettes* , she *drinks whiskey* and she lived with a *lover* for many years in New York. She *sings*, she *dances*, she tells *jokes* and she gives *Christmas gifts* to the other members of the nursing home. She is an emissary from the "other" life, a life of deprivation and hardship, not at all similar to the middle-class comforts of her relatives in Ireland. Similarly she is free from the affectations of middle-class society.

CASS

I got more stories than Bennet Cerf ever heard of--about cannibals and girls with Chinese tattoes on their bellies and about elephants and marooned sailors--hell, that's all Slinger ever done was tell me stories. He was a bum, okay, but he had lovely teeth. Like the one about this guy that comes home drunk every night and his wife she's about sick of him. You know that one, Harry?

HARRY

Cass, this sort of talk--

CASS

So sick she can't stick it no more. Anyways, this night the guy comes home plastered again and falls across the bed and starts snoring. And the wife she has this empty candy box with a great big blue satin rosette on the lid, and she takes the rosette off the box and goes over to the bed and takes the guy's trousers off and ties the bow to his rice crispies. And the next morning when he wakes up first thing he sees is this big blue rosette. And the wife she says to him, "Where were you last night ?" And the guy he scratches his head and he says, "Jeez, honey, I don't know. But wherever I was I got first prize." [8]

3. Lily in*The Freedom of the City* (1973)

Lily's carnivalesque activities have been documented in Chapter Two. To sum up here, she *drinks , dances , sings* and *dresses up* in the Mayor's robes. She also *play-acts* several roles with Skinner.

4. Masha in *The Three Sisters* (trans. 1981)

Masha is, of course, Chekhov's creation, and her free and unconventional spirit is celebrated slightly differently in each translation of the play. I draw attention here more particularly to Friel's unique translation of Masha's song in Act II which she sings to annoy and insult (abuse) Natasha:

> The baron is pissed, is pissed, is pissed;
> I wished I were pissed, full pissed, mad pissed.
> Was she ever pissed, full pissed, half-pissed?. . . **9**

The five Mundy sisters follow in the wake of Friel's "carnivalized" women in that they too *dance* and *sing* (all five of them), smoke *cigarettes* (Maggie) swear (mostly Maggie and Rosie in imitation of her), tell *jokes* (Maggie) indulge in *masquerade* (Maggie with the flour mask, Christina with the priest's surplice). The sexuality of the Mundy sisters is not so much explored but acknowledged in this play in a way it has not been for previous women characters. The sexuality of Friel's former women characters is alluded to (Cass, for instance) or functions as part of the plot (Mag in *Lovers* and the four ladies of the farcical *Communication Cord*), but it is not a focus in itself until the five sisters of *Dancing. Dancing At Lughnasa* explores not so much the sexual activities of these five women as their sexual desire both for its own sake and with respect to men :

1. Chrissie is the mother of the illegitimate child Michael, and she is in love with the wandering Gerry.
2. Agnes is also in love with Gerry.
3. Rose is in love with Danny Bradley, and there is the suggestion that they may have had sexual relations on their outing to Lough Anna.
4. When Maggie recounts her telling of the Ardstraw dance we find her to have been a high-spirited young woman who was "keen" on Brian McGuiness and who rode on the handlebars of a bike all the way to the dance. The speech is a recall of the sexuality of her youth and the possibilities it offered.
5. Kate has a "notion", as Rosie calls it, of Austin Morgan, who owns the store in the arcade and who marries a girl from Carrickfad at the end of the play.

The sensuality/sexuality of all five sisters without exception is acknowledged as an intrinsic part of the theme of celebration/festivity. The sisters' high animal spirits and sensual natures are celebrated in the first big step dance of Act I. The theme of female sexuality is equally implicit in this dance and is explicit in the Gerry/Chrissie , Gerry/Agnes sequences. It is implicit in the discussion the sisters undertake about whether they will go to the harvest dance or not. Agnes says: " And I don't care how young they are, how drunk and dirty and sweaty they are. I want to dance, Kate. It's the Festival of Lughnasa. I'm only thirty five. I want to dance." (***Dancing*** **13**) We are reminded that these five women are actually five young women. The acknowledgment of the sisters' sensual and free nature for its own sake is particularly noteworthy precisely because none of the five women are attached in the usual sense either to a husband or lover. Not one of them has ever been married; and Chrissie's connection to Gerry is passionate but tenuous at best.

It is worth considering the exploration of female sexuality in a play whose theme is Carnival. We have looked at the place of women in the tradition of literary Carnival and have seen her as an instrument of uncrowning, cleansing and degradation. The pleasure principle might be regarded as inherently feminine. The concepts of subversion, uncrowning, and degradation or bringing down to earth might intrinsically resonate to that which is female. We have seen how the concept of degradation or bringing down to earth is connected to conception and giving birth and to the other functions of the genital organs, including copulation and defecation. It is possible to consider women the natural Agents of Carnival by virtue of their sex. They are the natural creators of new life. The "second life" might be regarded as female by definition because women are "second", the emissaries of that which is unauthoritarian, the affective, "unofficial" domain. Introducing a focus on women not hitherto seen in Friel's work would seem to be a logical consequence in a play which explores the nature of festivity, play, celebration, subversion. It would appear that this subject matter necessitates by definition the consideration and exploration of the female. I refer again to Bakhtin's quotation on Socrates (Chapter One) where he describes the "dialogical" quality which characterizes the carnivalesque. The italics in this instance are mine:

> The truth is not *born* and does not reside in the head of a individual person; it is born of the dialogical *intercourse* between people in the collective search for the truth. Socrates called himself a "pander". He brought people together and caused them to collide in a dispute as a result of which the truth was *born* ; in relation to this *newborn* truth Socrates called himself a *" midwife "*, because he assisted with the *birth*. For this reason he called his method an *"obstetric "* one **(Bakhtin, *Poetics* 90).**

In his description of the dialogic process, out of which , according to Socrates, the truth emerges, he uses birth as a metaphor for the onset of the truth and thus uses several terms which relate expressly and singularly to the female. If, with respect to the priest and Carnival, *Dancing At Lughnasa* emerges as a reponse to the tension between Ballybeg and the individual in Friel's previous work , the presence and scope of the female characters here seems to indicate that this tension between the official and the unofficial, the status quo and the "second" life cannot be explored or resolved without explicit reference to women. As the new idea of the truly holy priest uncrowns the tension between the "carnivalized" priest of the status quo and the "magician" of the "other" life, so the emergence of five women with specific reference to their sensuality/sexuality in the context of merrymaking, celebration, festivity and ceremony "uncrowns" Friel's pattern of male agents of Carnival and "crowns" the tradition of Granny, Cass McGuire, Lily, and Masha.

Friel has dedicated his play to his mother and her sisters: "In memory of those five brave Glenties women". In 1510 Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam wrote his famous carnivalesque paean entitled *The Praise of Folly* and dedicated it to his friend, Thomas More. On the subject of women and their place with respect to the carnivalesque I will let Folly herself have the last word :

> Whether there can be a satisfactory party without women, let others decide. This much is certain: without a little folly, no party is any fun. Therefore, if a natural or make-believe fool is not present to raise a laugh, they send out for a hired entertainer, or bring

in a silly stooge, who by his gags, that is, by his foolish remarks--will drive silence and stiffness away from the company. After all, what is gained by loading the belly with all good things unless the eyes, the ears, and the whole mind are likewise fed with laughter, wit and humor? And of these dainties I am the only cook. The other dinner games such as choosing the king by lot, throwing dice, drinking healths, passing the bottle, singing rounds and dancing were not discovered by the Seven Sages of Greece but by me, for the pleasure of mankind. It is the nature of all these things that the more foolish they are, the more they promote humane living which can't be called living at all when it is sad. But sad it will be, unless by diversions of this sort you chase away gloom. **10**

Final Conclusions:

In Chapter One I chose to isolate and identify what I have called the carnivalesque element in the inception of the Irish Literary Renaissance with respect to its first plays (*The Playboy*) actors (the working-class Fays) and spaces (the boxing gymnasium, morgue and church which came to be known as the Abbey). I have chosen to isolate this element despite or because of the overwhelming prevalence of realism which dominated the early Abbey and which has been largely responsible for that theatre's evolution throughout the twentieth century as a mainspring of Irish theatrical tradition. I contend that this "second life" exercise in subversion, if you will, of theatrical experiment flourished alongside the more dominant realism. I contend that the unique socio-political context of Ireland as a colonised country made the Irish Literary Renaissance a breeding ground for subversion, parody, travesty, pitting the unofficial against the official. In the instance of *The Playboy* riots a different "theatre" altogether emanated from the one the Abbey audiences came to see on the stage. The "damned honest tory rory, rantum scantum, dancing, singing, laughing, boozing, jolly, friendly, fighting, hospitable" carnivalesque vein in Brian Friel's work is the inheritor of this tradition and the perpetrator of it as uniquely Irish.

The "second life" of Private Gar (*Philadelphia!*), through the uncrowning and transformation downward of authority (*Freedom*), the Irish language and heritage in parodic travesty (*Communication Cord*) and the Russian counterpart of these in *Fathers and Sons* all find a common meeting place in *Dancing At Lughnasa* , which explores all these Carnival contexts and others--death, misrule--principally by way of dance/music. In this sequence we encounter a dramaturgy that evolves from the verbal to the pre-verbal and visual .

Again, I am isolating the carnivalesque for examination. *Dancing* correctly belongs to the tradition of Irish plays which boast a superior celebration of words, phrases, poetry. There is more dialogue overall than dancing in the play. But the amount of dance/music and other Carnival activities here is significant and unique to the work of Friel. The play acts as an extension and amplification of a dramaturgy which has emerged as increasingly pre-verbal and visual, a dramaturgy which in its use of dance and music up to now (most recently, *The*

Communication Cord, Fathers and Sons) threatens to eclipse the verbal dominion of his former works The previous plays have employed elements of the pre-verbal while wrestling with such themes as abandonment and exile (*Philadelphia!)* revolution and murder (*Freedom*) language and tradition (*Communication Cord*). In *Dancing* the preverbal finds itself the thematic focus of direct investigation, the nature or composition of ritual, celebration, revelry--and coming directly out of this, dance/music. Dance is used in this play as a dramaturgical metaphor for the underlying dynamics between or among the characters. Its use here actively eclipses the purely verbal exchanges (for example, the "brown cow" exchange between Gerry and Chrissie) which seek to do the same thing. The carnivalesque dance/music passages accomplish two things with respect to the audience. They engage the audience on an emotional, affective level with the multi-dimensional music/dance/text extending the invitation of the "party" to the onlookers, encouraging vital, active participation. Concurrently they alienate the audience by means of ironic reference via the prior narrative monologues, forcing the audience to sit back, observe, criticize, draw conclusions. If, for instance, the Lily/Michael/Skinner scenes from *Freedom* or the Gerry/Chris, Gerry/Agnes dance sequences of *Dancing* were extracted from these plays for individual presentation, the meaning of these scenes without the context of the whole piece (i.e., the presentational dramatic passages which place the carnivalesque scenes in ironic reference) would be entirely lost or misinterpreted. The information imparted directly by the narrator (s) to the audience is as much a part of these scenes as the scenes themselves and the scenes are as dependant on that presentational narration as they are on their representational selves. This engaging/alienating does not subject one to the other, but rather both reinforce and complement one another as integral to the play as a piece for performance.

Friel has spoken about the need of a writer to continully subvert his former work. *Dancing* may be perceived as a dramaturgical culmination and a thematic departure. This play "uncrowns" the former plays thematically (i.e., takes on an entirely different theme) while "crowning" the multi-experimental dramaturgy which has developed and expanded via these same former works. I have broken down this dramaturgical expansion for the purpose of analysis here into three parts: the carnivalesque "structure" of the play, the dance/music sequences and what I have called **The Final Banquet**. On a thematic level the

play investigates the nature of revelry, celebration, festivity via this experimental festive dramaturgy. Richard Pine has referrred to Friel as a diviner and has identified that position as being outside society's rite of passage, as deriving its power from a source outside or beyond the parameters of any given society. Friel's voice as the diviner is heard more clearly in this play than in his former works. Indeed the power of the diviner, medium, priest, the power of that which is not official overrules the official because it precedes the official. This tension has been a major force in Friel's former works, both short stories and plays and, as I have pointed out, the carnivalesque character of Father Jack here seeks to resolve this tension. It also introduces an entirely "new" avenue for investigation--the issue of women with reference to their sexual/social/political status.

The question here is: what is the effect of the Carnival elements in this play? Do the Carnival elements act as temporary deflectors in a society of characters condemned to their relentlessly gray defeatist lives? Or do they actively promise something better? Do they portend significant change, reversal, revolution, obliteration? I don't think the deaths of many of the characters involved really affect this question. Death is inevitable for everyone and I have addressed in this thesis how the perception of death as beginning/end, praise/abuse is most particularly Irish. Death itself is not perceived, in this culture, as the end or as defeat. What is of greater concern here is the knowledge the playwright gives early on in the play of how the characters will remain largely unfulfilled. Kate and Maggie will continue on much as they have before, Chrissie will work to the end of her days in a factory which she hates and Agnes and Rose will end up alcoholic, homeless and destitute. Does Friel intend the carnivalesque activities only as a colourful gesture in the face of grim inevitability? The sisters are not so fortunate as Sachs priest and wandering wife whom we might perceive as dolts but who, in a sense, also end up as winners. Are the carnival elements a deliberate ploy to first woo, then disappoint the audience? I have spoken of the notion of gesture with respect to *Freedom* before. I think the same notion of gesture applies here. With respect to the story of the play, we must conclude the music/dancing and other Carnival activities do not alter anything for these characters in the "big" picture of their lives. Their presence suggests their use as a pertinent, heartbreaking, colorful contrast which throws the finale of the play into relief. They create a bright, gay, merry world despite the poverty, hardship,

loss and death. They invite, they promise, they flirt with the anticipation of better, bigger, more wonderful things to come as surely as they let us know it will all come to naught. They act as a double-edged sword at one and the same time, engaging the on-looker with life in the present while alienating the same on-looker with death in the future. But the Carnival activities suggest a refusal to completely concur with what is and at least consider what might be. For this particular group of characters, there will be no great revelations, no enormous upheavals, perhaps no significant advance forward at all. This gives the play a pathetic quality, because as surely as we rejoice in the liberating carnivalesque activities we see unfold before us, we must also despair, knowing as we do, that they will not make a difference. It is possible to look on the play as a study of failure, of fated lives. There is a dialogical relationship between the festive dramaturgy and the theme of failure. The refusal to completely concur with the powers that be is a gesture worthy of note and it is precisely this refusal to capitulate on the part of the characters that renders the play a comedy, not a tragedy. We will dance, we will sing, we will swear, we will laugh and dress up and have a picnic and drink and tell jokes, even as we continue to trod the same old footworn paths. We will have a life in spite of it all. I conclude that the play is carnivalesque as to form (its festive dramaturgy) and carnivalesque as to content (the consideration of ritual which involves dancing, singing, eating, etc.), but revolution in the lives of these particular characters does not emerge out of this carnivalesque form/content.

But the play speaks to more than just the story of these particular people as it speaks to a sensibility which goes beyond Ireland itself. I have spoken in Chapter Three of the international sensibility to which this play appeals, Irish and not Irish at the same time. Michael Etherton in *Contemporary Irish Dramatists* juxtaposes the Third World view of Drama with that of the first world--namely that the Third World readily accepts the idea that all drama has a significant social function with respect to the concept of evolving community. He is ultimately speaking of a non-literary drama which will come out of the experience of the populace as a concrete, theatrical embodiment of community. He identifies Friel as the traditional playwright from the literary point of view who comes closest to this not-yet-realized phenomenon and so identifies *Dancing* in his Abbey Program Note, as pregnant with the potential for social change and revolution, a play in which Ireland speaks directly to and with Africa, both

victims of the present neo-colonial global village. It would seem that he is suggesting that the play is a kind of transitional liason between the literary tradition from which it surely emanates and a kind of theatrical expressson which would come out of actual experience--as opposed to one which, in depending on words, emerges as literature.

If the play is about failure, albeit its carnivalesque dramaturgy, how is the question of social change pertinent at all? I think Friel makes use of the medium of dance/music to explore the sameness and commonality at the heart of all oppressed people, all over the world. I do not think he is suggesting dance/music as a panacea for world-wide social injustice. In making use of dance/music as the medium through which the characters communicate he is regressing to a pre-verbal, universal vocabulary which overrules the parameters of any specific nationality, culture or religion. It is the recognition that these forces cannot and will not be controlled by Ballybeg, Roman Catholicism, Neo-colonialism. These primal forces promote the idea of community. whether relgious or secular and the idea of community speaks to enfranchisement and power even as separation, fragmentation, speaks to disenfranchisement and powerlessness. If sin is indeed separation, perhaps community which embraces praise, thanksgiving and fun is a state of grace. It is this state of grace that Father Jack appears to address when he speaks of his African experience. Bakhtin has said that Carnival does not recognize a division between performers and spectators, that, in fact, everyone participates in it, therefore everyone is a performer. *Dancing At Lughnasa* does not culminate with the audience rising from their seats to join the banquet, the party but the characters in the play perform both the role of performer and spectator and perhaps this is a mirror for the audience. In the performances of this play the audience remain receptors but they are reminded of their capacity to respond, to join, to come together, to move. It is the dialectic itself, the dialogue between authority and the "second life", the consideration of that which is permanent and static with that which is transient and everchanging, which is Friel the diviner's primary concern. Bakhtin has said that Carnival is regarded as a process with respect to uncrowning rather than the tearing down and replacing of something else. It is the process of replacement before our eyes, the refusal to completely concur with any fixed authority, that is the point. If the play leaves us with more questions than answers, I think that is by design. The same ambiguity regarding interpretation

I pointed out with respect to *Freedom* and *Fathers and Sons*. I think the whole point is that this ambiguity is integral to the notion of Carnival itself. Nothing is changed completely, answered or folded away. There is only an eternal quest into the process of replacing. This play identifies this experience as uniquely Irish and at the same time not Irish or African or anything except just human.

END NOTES

[1] Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 86.

The following quotation is excerpted from the above -named work:

> The relation of the *Coena* to the Saturnalia is admitted by nearly all scholars. Its history and authorship still remain problematical. The basic theme is taken from the parable of the king celebrating his son's wedding (Matthew 22:1-14). All the figures from the Old and New Testaments, from Adam and Eve to Christ, are assembled at the great banquet. They are seated according to their role in scriptures: Adam is in the middle, Eve is sitting on a fig leaf, Cain on a plow, Abel on a milk jug, Noah on the ark, Absalom on branches, and Judas on a money-box. The food and drink served to the guests are also chosen according to their role. For example, Christ is served raisin wine called "passus" (from the word *passio* the Passion). All the other arrangements are also presented in grotesque form. After eating (which is the first part of the antique symposium) Pilate brings water for the washing of hands. Martha is in attendance, David plays the harp, Salome dances, Judas kisses his fellow guests, Noah is drunk, and a rooster prevents Peter from following asleep. On the day following the feast the guests bring gifts to their host: Abraham offers a ram, Moses the tables of the law, Christ a lamb. This scene is followed by the theme of a theft. The king discovers that many gifts have been stolen. A search is started and all the guests are treated as thieves. Hagar is executed in atonement and solemnly buried. Such is the construction of a "Cyprian's supper." It marks the beginning of the banquet tradition in medieval literature.

2 Hans Sachs, *Nine Carnival Plays* , trans. with an Introduction and Notes by Randall W. Listerman (Ottawa, Canada: Dovehouse Editions Inc. 19901) Introduction 9-10.

The following excerpt is taken from the Introduction :

> Scholars have several theories about the origin of the word "Fastnacht". In combination with *fasten* , "to fast", *Fastnacht* means the time before the fast. Because of the worldly nature of *Fastnacht* some consider the root word to be the middle High German verb *vaseln* meaning "to thrive" or "be fertile". Wilhelm Wackernagel believed that the first component of the word was not taken from *fasten* (to fast) but rather from *fasen* or *faseln* (to talk nonsense, to have fun). He submitted that *Fastnacht* would thus denote an evening of fasting and fooling. He also stated that the popular interpretation in medieval times could easily have meant a time of carousing and application to the Fass (cask). Whatever the accuracy of these various etymological interpretations, they are certainly applicable to the spirit of Hans Sachs's Fastnachtsspiele.

3 I am indebted for the information and quotations here to Randall W. Listerman who wrote the Introduction in the above-mentioned work for his fuller, more comprehensive description of this genre.

4 Brian Friel, "The Diviner," *The Best Stories of Brian Friel* (Dublin: Allison & Busby Ltd., 1982) 25.

5 Brian Friel, *Living Quarters , Selected Plays of Brian Friel* (London: Faber & Faber, 1987) 208.

6 Brian Friel, *Making History* (London: Faber & Faber, 1989) 6.

7 D.E. S. Maxwell, *Brian Friel* (Cranbury, New Jersey: Associated University Presses, 1973) 34-35.

8 Brian Friel, *The Loves of Cass McGuire* (New York: Farrar Strauss and Giroux, 1966) 76-77.

9 Anton Chekhov, *The Three Sisters,* trans. Brian Friel (Dublin: Gallery Press, 1981) 60.

10 Desiderius Erasmus, *The Praise of Folly,* ed. Leonard Dean (New York: Hendricks House, 1957) 56-57.

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APPENDIX ONE

CARNIVAL CHART

Dancing at Lughnasa

DANCE	MUSIC/SINGING	VERBAL "PLAY"
Rose (3)	"Abyssinia" Rose (3)	Maggie / Boy (7, 8)
Hitching up skirt Maggie (3)	"Abyssinia"; "De Valera" Maggie, Rose (4)	Maggie / Boy (14)
Maggie, Rose (4)	"Isle of Capri" Maggie (6)	Joke in Swahili Maggie (15)
Mention of "Are we all for a big dance somewhere" (5)	"Abyssinia" Rose (13)	Joke re Priest Maggie (16)
Maggie with bucket (5)	Mention of Gerry as seller of gramophones (28)	Joke: "Get some men for all of us" Maggie (40)
Mention of, Kate (10, 11)	"Isle of Capri" Maggie (35)	Maggie and the Boy (43, 44)
Mention of, Sophie McLaughlin (11)	"Everybody's Doing It" Maggie's song (37)	Sisters and Father Jack on communal living (62, 63)
Mention of Harvest Dance Agnes, Rose, Kate (12, 13)	Incomprehensible singing Father Jack (41, 42)	"Brown Cow" speech Gerry and Chris (30, 31)
Rose (13)	Mention of singing melody (42)	
Ardstraw Dance Maggie (20)		

Dancing at Lughnasa

DANCE	MUSIC/SINGING	DISGUISE / MASQUERADE
Big Dance sequence All five sisters (21, 22)	"Gypsie" Maggie (43)	Father Jack in uniform (8, 68)
Mention of Gerry as dance teacher (28)	Incantation, chant (47)	Sisters' dance: Maggie in flour mask; Christina in surplice (21)
Dancing into kitchen Chris (37)	"O Ruddier than the Berry" Father Jack (46)	Father Jack with Governor's hat (40)
Father Jack's dance (41, 42)	"O Ruddier than the Berry" Father Jack (48)	Father Jack in woman's sweater (45)
Dance Mention of Chris and Gerry (42)	"Trapeze" Gerry (53) "Anything Goes" Gerry, Maggie (65)	"We paint our faces with coloured powders" (48)
Dance to "Gypsy" Maggie (43, 44)	"Anything Goes" (64)	The Recruiting Officer in disguise (50, 51)
Ritual dance (47)	"Anything Goes" (69)	Gerry as a clown (53, 54)
Lepers (48)	"The British Grenadiers" (4)	Rose's clothes 'good' (56)
Military Two-step (49)	"The Mason's Apron" (21, 22)	Gerry in disguise (61)
Chris and Gerry (50)	"Dancing in the Dark" (32)	Stage directions Father Jack (17, 18)

Dancing at Lughnasa

DANCE	MUSIC/SINGING	GIVING OF GIFTS
Dancing Gerry (61)	"Anything Goes" on radio (64)	Top, whip, library book Kate to Boy (9)
"Anything Goes" Gerry, Agnes (64) Gerry, Maggie (65)	Mention of "Music from the Thirties" (71)	Charm Danny to Rose (6)
Dialogue re: dance while they are dancing Gerry, Agnes (65)		Mention of bike Gerry to Boy (44)
Mention of Harvest Dance Kate (66)		
Gesture, movement; rejection ceremony Gerry with new "tricorn" (69)		
Everyone (cast) moving in last speech (71)		
Speech on movement, dance Michael (71)		

Dancing at Lughnasa

PHYSICAL PLAY / MIME	CURSING, SWEARING, OATHS	SEXUAL ACTIVITY
Using cane as golf club Gerry (27)	"Bastard" Chris (6) "Jesus Christ" Maggie (8)	"Boys about to play with" Agnes, Maggie (5)
Stick as gun to kill magpie Gerry (30)	"Bloody" Christina (22)	Danny Bradley Rose (5, 6)
Imitating motor-bike Gerry (50)	"Goddam bloody useless" Rose (23)	Austin Morgan re: Kate (10) Dancing, Chris and Gerry (32)
Swinging in tree Gerry (off-stage) (53)	"Jesus Christ Almighty" Chris (24) "Tinker," "Loafer," "Wastrel" Thrashing of Gerry, Kate (30)	Love children Father Jack (63)
	"Bitch" Agnes to Kate (34) "Bastard" Kate of Gerry (34)	Sex in the sycamore with Gerry (62) Kissing Agnes (65) Father Jack (63)
	"Possessed" Christina (69) "Wow, wow, wow" Gerry (71)	Gerry kissing Chris (67) Danny Bradley outing, Rose (56, 57) Maggie on Brian McGuiness (20)

Dancing at Lughnasa

FOOD, DRINK	DEATH	RITUAL, CEREMONY	MONEY
"I love you more than chocolate biscuits!" (13)	Of drink Rose, Agnes (60)	References to Obi; Festival of the New Yam; and Festival of the Sweet Cassava (47)	From knitting Rose, Aggie (23)
Soda bread (15)	Eve of following Lughnasa Father Jack (70)	"Medicine Man" (49) Spirits of the tribe (49)	Coin from the Boy (43)
Bilberries Rose (57)	Gerry (61)	Reference to Lughnasa (59)	Money for chocolate biscuits Rose (5)
Soda bread and jam (46)	Pet rooster (67)	Uka, Ito (60)	
Palm wine (48) "Picnic"; milk, chocolate biscuits (59)	Marconi's several "deaths" throughout play	Other forces Maggie (66)	
Eggs Ballybeg; caraway seed bread (58) Picnic supper (67)		Exchange of the two hats (68, 69)	
		Kites: Display with faces (70)	